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General Assembly

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Committee on Information
Twenty-seventh session
18-28 April 2005

Provisional agenda and annotations/programme of work

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
4. Statement by the Chairman.
5. Admission of new members.
6. Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information.
7. General debate and consideration of reports submitted by the Secretary-General.
8. Open-ended working group of the Committee on Information.
9. Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session.

Annotations/programme of work

18 April 2005

1. Opening of the session

The session will be opened by the Chairman of the Committee on Information.

2. Election of officers

At its organizational session held in 1980, the Committee on Information reached an agreement according to which the principle of geographical rotation would be applied to all officers of the Committee and they would be elected for two-year terms. At the beginning of the twenty-seventh session, the Committee will elect a Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur to serve in their respective capacities during 2005 and 2006.

05-22346 (E) 080205

3. **Adoption of the agenda and programme of work**

The provisional agenda has been prepared on the basis of consultations among the members of the outgoing Bureau.

4. **Statement by the Chairman**

The Chairman will address the Committee at its opening meeting.

5. **Admission of new members**

The Committee will consider requests for membership in the Committee on Information.

6. **Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information**

The Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information will address the Committee at its opening meeting to provide an update on the activities of the Department and report on the implementation of the recommendations contained in General Assembly resolutions 59/126 A and B of 10 December 2004 and 57/300 of 20 December 2002.

18-20 April 2005

7. **General debate and consideration of reports submitted by the Secretary-General**[1]

Consideration of this item will include the following reports:

Progress report of the Secretary-General on the continuing reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2005/2)

Report of the Secretary-General on the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres (A/AC.198/2005/3)

Report of the Secretary-General on new strategic directions in the modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries (A/AC.198/2005/4)

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Communications Group (A/AC.198/2005/5)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations web site (A/AC.198/2005/6)

21-27 April 2005

8. **Open-ended working group of the Committee on Information**

The Secretariat will require a 48-hour period to process the draft report of the Committee in all official languages.

28 April 2005

9. Consideration and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session

Notes

[1] The following wording for the sub-items of the general debate is based on General Assembly resolution 34/182 of 18 December 1979:

(a) Promotion of the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communications order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information;

(b) Continuation of the examination of United Nations public information policies and activities, in the light of the evolution of international relations, and the need to establish the new international economic order and the new world information and communications order;

(c) Evaluation and follow-up of the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications.

United Nations A/AC.198/2005/2

General Assembly

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7 February 2005

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Committee on Information
Twenty-seventh session
18-28 April 2005

Continuing reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications: a progress report

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Since 2002, the Department of Public Information has undergone a comprehensive review of its management and operations. As a result, it has adopted a new strategic approach that concentrates on key messages forming part of a coordinated communications strategy. It has acquired new communications tools that seek to make balanced use of the new communications technologies, especially the Internet, while continuing to improve upon its use of the traditional means of communication, including radio and print materials. It has also widened the pool of its communications partners, ranging from public to private and corporate sectors. A new culture of evaluation and performance management has now become an integral part of its activities.

Throughout the second half of 2004 and in early 2005, the Department of Public Information was focused on communicating to the world a process of revitalization and reform of the United Nations. The main elements of this process are a campaign to promote the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, the new vision of collective security for the twenty-first century presented in the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and the observance of the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations.

05-23124 (E) 040305

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 12 of its resolution 59/126 B of 10 December 2004, the General Assembly noted the Secretary-General's proposals and actions to improve the effective and targeted delivery of public information activities, including the restructuring of the Department of Public Information (DPI), in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the Assembly, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information in this regard at its twenty-seventh session. In paragraph 15, the Assembly took note of the reorientation exercise in enhancing the performance and effectiveness of DPI, and also requested the Secretary-General to report on progress achieved in this regard to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session.

2. The General Assembly, in several other paragraphs of the same resolution, called on the Department to provide specific information on a number of its activities to the Committee on Information. In consultation with the Bureau of the Committee, it was decided that the information requested by the Assembly would be grouped into five reports, the most comprehensive of which would be the present one. The remaining reports would address requests for information on specific areas, such as the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres (A/AC.198/2005/3), the modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries (A/AC.198/2005/4), the activities of the United Nations Communications Group (A/AC.198/2005/5) and the United Nations web site (A/AC.198/2005/6).

II. New strategic approach of the Department of Public Information: opportunities and challenges

3. The overall objective of the Secretary-General's reform proposals on public information, contained in his September 2002 report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387), was to enhance public information through a broad-based restructuring of DPI. These proposals led to a reorientation of the Department, based on a comprehensive review of its management and operations. The new strategic approach adopted by the Department now seeks to focus on key messages as part of a coordinated communications strategy. Responding to the needs of its global audience, the Department has continued to maintain a balance between the new communications technologies, especially the Internet, and the traditional means of communication, including radio and print materials. At the same time, it has widened the pool of its communications partners, including from private, public and corporate sectors. A central element of its public information activities has been the promotion and refinement of a culture of evaluation and performance management.

A. A question of credibility: responding to unfounded criticism

4. Over the past 12 months, the United Nations has been in the eye of a media storm in many parts of the world. Amid allegations of corruption, mismanagement and a lack of transparency and accountability in some of its activities, its efficiency, effectiveness and relevance have been publicly and persistently challenged. The

nature of these criticisms has varied widely: the Organization's image in the Middle East continues to be buffeted as developments unfolding in Iraq and in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict have prompted controversy with regard to the role of the United Nations; in North America and in parts of Europe, there has been strong criticism of alleged corruption and mismanagement in the oil-for-food programme; and there has been similar concern voiced over charges of sexual exploitation in peacekeeping operations.

5. The Department has faced an unprecedented test in mobilizing resources to engage in this public debate simultaneously on so many fronts. As an initial step, it strengthened its monitoring of media around the world, making use of new technologies and intensified efforts by United Nations information centres, to provide senior officials with press materials and regular analyses. Moreover, the Department strengthened its media outreach capacity, committing dedicated resources to working with other offices to ensure a coordinated and rapid response to misinformation in the media, as well as the formulation of substantive information for United Nations officials to use when speaking to the press on specific issues. In addition, the Department assisted in the drafting and placement of "op-eds" (opinion articles) by senior officials in newspapers in all parts of the world to further project the Organization's perspective on crucial issues.

6. The image of the United Nations in the Middle East region continued to be of particular concern. To this end, a follow-up meeting to the September 2002 workshop on this issue was held in Beirut in May 2004 to implement a coordinated public information strategy in the region aimed at explaining the Organization's role and activities in the various areas of concern in the region. In addition, with financial assistance from the United Nations Foundation, the Department held two media workshops — a week-long session in March 2004 for senior Arab commentators, who were given the opportunity to hear from and debate with senior officials about the Organization's role in the region, and a two-week programme in November-December 2004 for Arab radio and newspaper journalists, who were briefed on the work of the Organization and its various intergovernmental bodies. Moreover, as part of an annual programme, the Department hosted a seven-week training programme for 10 Palestinian media practitioners from October-December 2004. This programme, designed to provide skills training as well as media exposure to young professionals from the occupied Palestinian territories, has brought to United Nations Headquarters some 80 Palestinian media practitioners since it was first mandated by the General Assembly in 1995.

7. The Department undertook proactive outreach efforts aimed at showing the media and the public at large the many ways in which the Organization is responding to global challenges on a daily basis. The relevance and effectiveness of the Organization was clearly demonstrated during the tsunami tragedy in south and south-east Asia in December 2004, when it responded swiftly to coordinate relief efforts and provided a global forum for reaching consensus on longer-term measures. For its part, the Department has committed resources to ensuring regular and timely multimedia coverage of the international humanitarian and recovery efforts in the countries affected by the tsunami. Thanks in part to the efforts of DPI, the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (Kobe, Japan, 18-22 January 2005), which took place only three weeks after the tsunami disaster, generated over 400 articles by major newspapers worldwide. Similarly, radio producers and photographers were sent to report on the efforts made by the United Nations system

to resolve the crisis in Darfur and to report on the historic Security Council meeting in Nairobi, as well as other significant events outside Headquarters.

B. Campaigning for United Nations renewal

8. Throughout the second half of 2004 and in early 2005, the Department of Public Information concentrated on drawing the world's attention to the process of revitalization and reform of the United Nations promoted by the Secretary-General. At the centre of the Department's campaign in support of the renewal were preparations for the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly at the commencement of its sixtieth session in September 2005 to review progress in implementing the United Nations Millennium Declaration. Aware of the challenge by the Secretary-General to use the Millennium +5 Summit as an opportunity to agree on bold decisions needed to move the world closer to that shared vision, the Department is developing an integrated communications strategy to link the summit with a series of high-profile events.

9. The first of these events was the launch in December 2004 of the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which outlined more than 100 proposals on reforming the Organization to enable it to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. For this launch, a major campaign was developed in close cooperation with the Secretariat of the High-level Panel and strategic partners, such as the United Nations Foundation, that targeted policy makers as well as the public at large. The campaign aimed to remind world leaders of the need to engage constructively at the United Nations on global threats with a view to taking action at the 2005 Summit and to convince a more general audience that 2005 will be a year of decision, requiring the constructive input of their leaders. Within one week, the Department produced a bound edition of the report, a press kit and a summary overview. The report and related materials were placed on a specially designed web site, *www.un.org/secureworld*. To help shape the news story and respond to many requests, DPI organized briefings of editors or editorial boards on behalf of Panel members, both before and after the launch of the report. These briefings served to stimulate the interest of journalists and news organizations that were not directly reached by such briefings, but who felt they needed to bring themselves up to speed with their competitors. In addition to New York and Washington, D.C., briefings were held in London (with *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, the BBC, *The Financial Times* and *The Economist*), Berlin and Frankfurt (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Berliner Zeitung*, *Tagesspiegel*, *Die Welt*, *Financial Times Deutschland* and *Der Spiegel*) and in Paris (*Le Monde*, *Le Figaro* and *Jeune Afrique*). A commentary on the Panel report written by the Secretary-General was carried by *The Economist*, as well as by more than 30 newspapers worldwide, including the *Los Angeles Times*, *Le Monde*, the *International Herald Tribune*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Al Akhbar*, *El Pais*, *El Mercurio* (Santiago, Chile) and *The Nation* (Bangkok). The Department also arranged media interviews with several Panel members and helped organize a public discussion with several key Panel members at Headquarters, attended by over 400 civil society leaders.

10. In its campaign leading up to the General Assembly high-level review of implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the Department will publicize a series of other reports and events in 2005. These include contributing to the January

launch of the Millennium Project report, which sets out a plan for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and designing a campaign for the Secretary-General's report on implementing the Millennium Declaration, to be issued in March 2005, as well as high-level General Assembly events on AIDS and financing for development and the high-level Economic and Social Council session focusing on the Millennium Development Goals. DPI is also working in partnership with its 1,500 associated non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure that civil society voices contribute to the renewal and reform of the Organization. The 58th DPI/NGO Conference will be held the week before the Millennium +5 Summit and will highlight NGO efforts to support both the United Nations and Member States in their common commitments to the Millennium Declaration. The Conference is expected to be the central opportunity for civil society involvement in the Millennium +5 process.

11. Rallying greater support for the Millennium Development Goals, especially at the national level, remains a central focus for DPI. As part of the United Nations system-wide coordination on the Millennium Development Goals campaign, the Department has launched a new Millennium Development Goals logo, using the slogan "Keep the Promise" with the "2015" graphic developed by the Millennium Campaign. The Cyberschoolbus web site now includes a comprehensive overview of the Goals for a younger audience. A number of United Nations information centres also undertook activities to promote better public understanding of the Goals, including public service announcements (Bujumbura, Panama City and Ouagadougou), a theatre competition (Teheran), a cross-country race against poverty (Yaounde) and media training sessions (United Nations Offices in Almaty, Baku and Yerevan).

12. The culmination of the year's coordinated activities will be the observance, in October 2005, of the sixtieth anniversary of the Organization, which will provide an opportunity to remind Member States of their solemn obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, and the public at large of its role in mobilizing support for an organization which was created in its name. To accomplish both objectives, the Department is initiating during 2005 a range of activities aimed at involving Member States and enhancing its relationships with civil society partners and the general public. In keeping with the theme, "UN60: A Time for Renewal", a number of high profile activities and initiatives will be implemented in 2005. In addition to designing the UN60 logo and preparing guidelines for anniversary partners, the Department has begun creating a dedicated database and a calendar of sixtieth anniversary events, including concerts, colloquiums, exhibits and lectures, with partners in all regions of the world.

13. The Department is also planning a number of activities, with the support of the Permanent Mission of Sweden, to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Dag Hammarskjöld and reaffirm his legacy. These include the issuance of the 2005 calendar, illustrated by photographs from DPI archival collections, and quotes from Dag Hammarskjöld, and a "Lectures and Conversations" series, featuring a variety of experts to discuss the legacy of Hammarskjöld in the light of events, trends and crises affecting the United Nations in this century. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library's web site, "Dag Hammarskjöld: The UN Years", is also being updated.

C. Strengthening the culture of evaluation

14. From its inception in 2001 and as first reported in 2002, creating a culture of evaluation has been a cornerstone of the DPI reorientation process. The Department's strategic planning through systematic evaluation has been reinforced through cooperation with the Office of Internal Oversight Services. This collaborative project to evaluate all DPI activities has now entered its third and final year. The systematic review of the impact of public information activities has encouraged managers at all levels to focus on the evaluation of programme outcomes. This emphasis on results has underlined the importance of direct and regular contact with users of public information products, to align the work of the Department more closely with the needs of its target audiences. The process of establishing a culture of evaluation has significantly increased survey activities, which have more than doubled with the introduction of the annual programme impact review (see figure 1). Nearly 10,000 users have had the opportunity to provide their feedback on the usefulness, relevance and quality of a wide range of products, services and activities of the Department. Overall, surveys conducted since 2002 demonstrate that the Department has managed to meet the demands of an average of 80 per cent of its target audiences in terms of usefulness, relevance and quality of DPI products, activities and services (see figure 2). Audience feedback has also helped programme managers identify areas where they need to perform better. For example, based on feedback from users, one of the Department's web sites has since been redesigned to better serve their information needs.

Figure 1

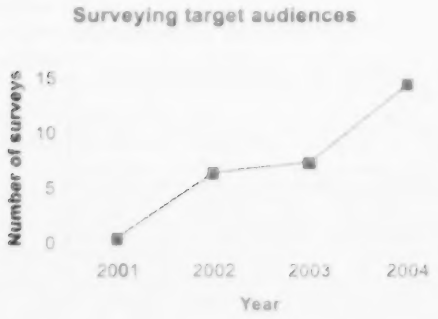
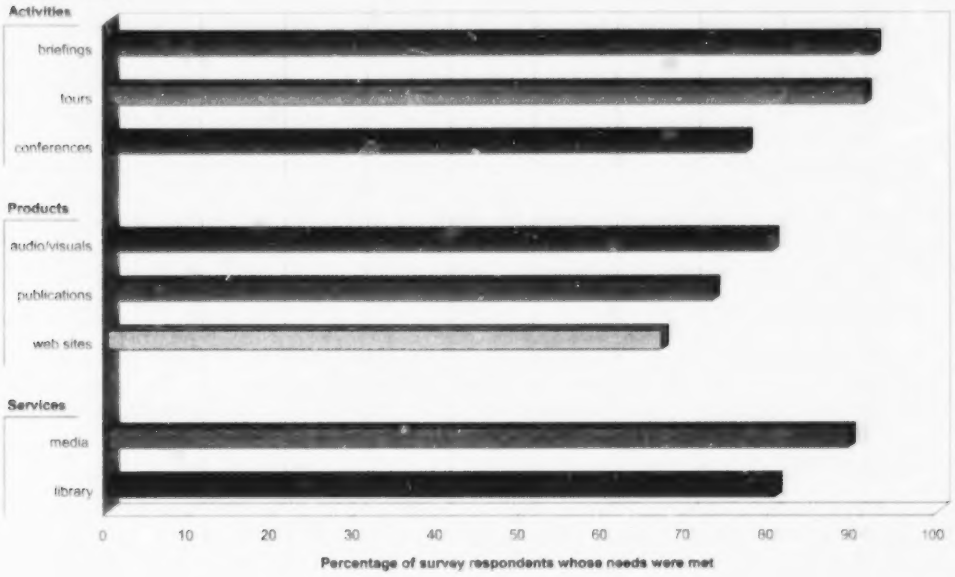


Figure 2

Usefulness, relevance and quality of DPI activities, products and services
(percentage)



15. To the credit of its managers, DPI has succeeded in obtaining feedback on the quality of its products and activities without draining resources from daily programme delivery, testifying to the Department's ability to work creatively within tight budgetary constraints. The increase in systematic assessment is also a direct result of the Department's efforts to ensure extensive training in audience research and evaluation techniques. While two thirds of professional staff at Headquarters have attended one or more of these training workshops, the Department faces a considerable challenge in ensuring adequate training for staff in the field. One avenue that is being explored is to invest in online training modules.

16. Another major challenge for the Department is to monitor and analyse the impact of its communications campaigns and press coverage of United Nations activities. Given budgetary limitations, employing an external company to do so is not a viable option. The Department is therefore building its technical infrastructure and internal capacities through training to enable the staff to conduct systematic media monitoring and analysis. This is a priority for the Department in 2005.

III. Strategic communications services: thematic priorities

17. Guided by the Millennium Declaration of September 2000 and General Assembly resolutions 58/101 B and 59/126 B, the Department of Public Information continued to pay particular attention to such major issues as the eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, HIV/AIDS

epidemic, combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, the needs of the African continent and dialogue among civilizations and cultures of peace.

18. Acting on recommendations of the Committee on Information, the Department took additional measures to further publicize the work and decisions of the General Assembly. As part of its continued emphasis on closer inter-agency collaboration and partnership, the Department was able to obtain a spokesman for the President of the fifty-ninth session of the Assembly through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). DPI itself loaned an information assistant to work full-time with the Spokesman for the President, thus providing back-up support and continuity in the flow of information to the media and within the Secretariat. The Department also provided constant updates to the web site dedicated to providing information on the work of the President of the Assembly. Coverage of the activities of the Assembly and those of its President was also significantly expanded. In addition to transmitting the statements of Heads of State and/or Government to the national radio stations of the least developed countries during the general debate, UN Radio conducted interviews with leaders from several of these countries, including Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Rwanda. The Foreign Ministers of Chad, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Madagascar, Mauritius, Senegal and Tajikistan were also interviewed. The *UN Chronicle* included in-depth coverage of the fiftieth-eighth and fifty-ninth sessions of the Assembly and all its Main Committees, and highlights of the general debate.

19. The client planning process, initiated in 2003 as part of the reform of DPI, was further strengthened. The Strategic Communications Division, which has the primary responsibility for this aspect of the Department's work, continued to consult with and advise client substantive departments on strategies and tactics needed to better promote their major activities and get their key messages out. Over a dozen communications strategies were formally devised and agreed upon for priority issues and events and these strategies were then carried out, with coordination across the Department. In order to generate more media coverage of economic and social development issues in both international and regional media, particularly for new reports issued, a strategy is being implemented with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs to hold press events launching reports in European, Asian or Latin American capitals, rather than only at Headquarters. This initiative has resulted in increased coverage of these reports in both international and regional media.

A. Thematic campaigns

20. As a result of closer coordination with the members of the United Nations system and the host Government, the Department was able to obtain substantial coverage for the 2005 Mauritius international meeting on the sustainable development of small island developing States (10-14 January 2005). Well ahead of the meeting, the Department disseminated a series of press releases/background papers on various aspects of the conference through a well-targeted LISTSERV of more than 1,400 journalists interested in small islands and environmental issues. Moreover, the Department hosted the bilingual official conference web site (*http://www.un.org/smallislands2005/*) and developed a special *UN Works* web site on islanders who made a difference in their communities (*http://www.un.org/works/smallislands/index.asp*). The conference press kit, issued in English and French, was

also distributed widely through the United Nations information centres. In addition, the Department made available staff from its New York and Geneva offices to provide media services to journalists attending the conference as well as radio, television, print and online coverage.

21. The Department, in partnership with the International Telecommunication Union, sought to raise awareness of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (Tunis, 16-18 November 2005). It assisted the outreach activities of the Secretariat of the Working Group on Internet Governance, which will submit its recommendations to the Summit. The activities of the Working Group were covered by *The Economist*, *Le Soleil* and several information and communication technology magazines, including *Computer Weekly*, *Web News*, *IT World*, *Computer Business Review* and *MacWorld*. Publications in the developing world were also targeted. An "op-ed" by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, on the United Nations and Internet governance, distributed by Inter Press Service, was published, among others, by the *Deccan Herald* (India) and *Democracia Digital* (Costa Rica).

22. The promotion of human rights continued to be a priority issue for the Department. The Under-Secretary-General held separate policy and coordination meetings with the High Commissioner for Human Rights in October 2004 and with the Deputy High Commissioner in December 2004. These meetings resulted in broad agreement on joint promotional activities. The observance of 2004 Human Rights Day, a joint effort of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and DPI, coincided with a General Assembly plenary session to mark the end of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). Two panel discussions were arranged, "Freedom from Fear and Want — the Human Rights Year in Review", and "Human Rights Education in the School System — Practical Experiences". An exhibit entitled "Lest We Forget: The Triumph Over Slavery", organized in association with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and a non-governmental organization, was mounted at United Nations Headquarters. The observance of Human Rights Day also coincided with the DPI-sponsored Annual Students Conference on Human Rights. Now organized as a multi-site videoconference programme, participants in the 2004 conference included students from Canada, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Students in China, India, Kenya, Romania, Sweden, the Philippines and the United Kingdom were also able to join through webcast and discussion boards.

23. The Department provided communications support for the July 2004 and January 2005 sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, targeting the local media of those countries that submitted national reports to the Committee. For the July session, press coverage was obtained in newspapers in Spain, Bangladesh and Malta. There was also extensive coverage by wire services in English and Spanish and online news services, including in Africa. For the annual observance of the adoption of the Security Council resolution on women, peace and security, DPI issued a special publication bringing the issues to life by featuring stories of women working for peace. The Secretary-General's report and the Security Council open debate were carried globally, thanks to the Department's radio, television, print and online coverage.

24. In keeping with the General Assembly's designation of Africa as a United Nations development priority, the Department redoubled its efforts to ensure that the activities of the Organization, African Governments and their partners in other countries received maximum exposure in the global media. A comprehensive system-wide information strategy was presented by the Special Adviser on Africa to the members of the United Nations Communications Group at its annual meeting, held in Nairobi in June. The strategy provides for ways to consolidate and strengthen the Organization's information work in support of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). In July 2004, the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information announced jointly with the Special Adviser on Africa, that the Department's *Africa Recovery* magazine — the centrepiece of the Organization's Africa information programme — would change its name to *Africa Renewal*. The change was intended to reflect the profound transformations now under way in Africa as leaders begin to implement NEPAD. The circulation of *Africa Renewal* and *Afrique Renouveau* magazines, combined, now reaches over 34,000 subscribers. A recent audience survey suggests that each copy is read by an average of eight to nine people, in addition to the subscriber, indicating that the magazines reach over 300,000 people.

25. The promotion of dialogue among civilizations and cultures of peace was another priority issue for the Department. In an effort to examine different manifestations of intolerance and explore ways to promote respect and understanding among peoples, it launched a series of seminars last year entitled "Unlearning intolerance", the first focusing on anti-Semitism and the second on Islamophobia. Designed as an open forum involving civil society organizations, members of the religious community and academia, the series offers the opportunity to discuss how intolerance, wherever it exists and for whatever reasons, can be "unlearned" through education, inclusion and example. More than 600 people attended each seminar, reflecting a very positive response from civil society organizations, foundations and interested individuals. The promotion of the dialogue among civilizations was further reinforced through the activities of United Nations information centres, including a poster competition (United Nations Office in Yerevan) and media round tables (United Nations Offices in Minsk and in Almaty). The United Nations Information Centre Sydney, in conjunction with the advertising company Saatchi and Saatchi, successfully placed advertisements with the theme "tolerance free of charge" in *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

B. United Nations peacekeeping and public information

26. DPI worked on two major fronts this year to address the surge in demands for United Nations peacekeeping: one was to raise awareness about United Nations peacekeeping, particularly the challenges posed by deploying new and expanded missions; the other was to prepare public information components of peacekeeping operations for rapid and effective deployment.

27. A cornerstone of the Department's work in the area of peacekeeping remains its close cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Planning and coordination with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations intensified in 2004 as DPI prepared public information materials and disseminated information on the surge to media and United Nations information centres. DPI worked closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the field missions to plan, staff and

support the public information components of the new and expanded missions, helping identify public information needs, developing budgets, staffing tables and operational concepts and identifying potential staff. DPI also continued to provide backstopping support to the public information components of ongoing peace missions, including by helping to develop communications strategies, arranging coverage of mission activities and developments by United Nations and other media, assisting in the selection of public information personnel and giving advice on public information policy matters.

28. This integrated planning was most visible in the case of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. DPI was closely involved from the very beginning stages of the planning process. This included participation in:

- Pre-mandate planning and informational meetings from February through May
- The assessment mission to Haiti in March 2004
- Headquarters planning meetings from June through November
- Ongoing informal consultations.

29. As a result of this integrated approach, DPI was able to play a major role in designing the information component of the Mission, selecting staff, determining the budget and laying out the blueprint for information activities. DPI worked closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to ensure that the Chief of Information and an information officer — both DPI staff members — were in Haiti in advance of the first day of the mandate. DPI has continued its close coordination with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on these same issues and is in constant contact with the public information office of the Mission itself.

30. The same process has been followed for the planning and set-up of the mission in Côte d'Ivoire. Although the Department did not participate in assessment missions for Burundi, it has been integrated into the Headquarters planning process. This has also been the case for the current political mission in the Sudan and the future peacekeeping mission in that country.

C. United Nations information centres

31. A central focus of the Secretary-General's 2002 reform proposals was improving the effectiveness of the network of United Nations information centres through rationalization and consolidation. As a first step, nine offices in Western Europe were closed and a Regional United Nations Information Centre was established in Brussels on 1 January 2004. A detailed plan on the further rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres was presented at the twenty-sixth session of the Committee on Information (see A/AC.198/2004/3). Discussions at that session and subsequent bilateral meetings with concerned Member States made it clear that there was no consensus on how to proceed with this process. A decision by the General Assembly to remove $2 million from the operational budget of United Nations information centres, which made the work of many information centres more difficult, and a combination of political and economic factors, including a precipitous decline in the value of the dollar, further complicated the rationalization process. Taking into account both the views of Member States and the new reality, the Secretary-General has revised his plan for

the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres, the details of which are included in his report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session (A/AC.198/2005/3).

32. Meanwhile, the Regional United Nations Information Centre in Brussels has begun to make steady progress as a regional information hub for Western Europe. Since moving to its new rent-free premises on 15 July 2004, it has been able to establish and expand its dissemination, media-monitoring and promotional activities through different media and in an increasing number of languages to all 22 countries of the region it covers. Drawing on existing databases from the former United Nations information centres, the regional centre has begun to produce, translate and disseminate press releases and other promotional material to key constituencies in the region. For example, in Portuguese alone, some 1,200 pages were produced and supplied to other United Nations system organizations, such as the United Nations Information Centre Rio de Janeiro and UNDP offices in the Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa and beyond. Similarly, German-language materials prepared by the German desk at the Regional United Nations Information Centre are distributed through the United Nations Information Service Vienna and other outlets. It has also successfully launched an electronic newsletter for partners in France, which contributed towards maintaining the visibility of the regional centre in that country. The new Regional United Nations Information Centre web site now covers most West European languages (*www.runic-europe.org*).

33. The Regional United Nations Information Centre in Brussels has also emerged as a venue for major United Nations events, such as launches of key reports, important press briefings and other activities aimed at the media. It has established close working relationships at all levels with the European Commission, the Council and Parliament with a view to designing joint initiatives and information products. At present, plans are being formulated with the Luxembourg presidency of the European Union Council to jointly organize journalist tours to European Union and United Nations projects in developing countries. With the presence of 16 other United Nations agencies and programmes in Brussels, the Regional United Nations Information Centre is also well placed to act as the focal point for joint public outreach activities of the United Nations country team. To this end, the centre has taken the initiative to create a local United Nations Communications Group, modelled after the Communications Group at United Nations Headquarters.

34. The report of the Secretary-General on the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres (A/AC.198/2005/3) provides information on the operational issues relating to the Regional United Nations Information Centre in Brussels.

IV. News services: connecting with the media

35. The News and Media Division has continued to pursue aggressively its central mandate of bringing, on a daily basis, the news of the full range of the Organization's diverse activities to the world through various media, including print, radio, television, photography and the Internet. A principal focus for the Division's activities over the past year has been the strengthening of partnerships with radio and television broadcasters for the delivery of more audio-visual products to a wider range of audience. This has been achieved through a three-part strategy of enhanced

feedback and evaluation with existing partners, outreach to new partners and strengthened coordination with other members of the United Nations family.

A. UN Radio, Television and video: building partnerships

36. The Department has continued to build on its strong existing base of more than 174 partner radio stations in 75 countries. New partnerships, for example, include Radio 10 in Guatemala, Radio Post Phillip in Australia and Communidad 100 in Argentina and three more stations in China — Radio Sichuan, Radio Lianing and Radio Ji Lin. One of the major highlights during the year was the launch of a new radio programme dedicated to Africa. A weekly show targeting Asia has been revitalized and a staff member will travel to India to produce and promote programmes. In another effort to broaden its outreach, the Department has received a grant to hire a United States radio reporter to prepare news and feature stories, "UN Minutes", for distribution to radio stations and networks, primarily in the United States. Bloomberg Radio has expressed a special interest in these short programmes, which are more in tune with an American mainstream audience that listens to music programmes intercut with short news segments. In addition, the Department has secured special promotion of its radio programmes through the International Association of University Presidents, which includes radio on campuses in 700 universities in the United States and worldwide.

37. Close ties with the Department's broadcast partners are crucial to maintaining continued airing of its material. To this end, DPI has continued to inform its broadcast partners about services available and inquire about their needs. *AV eNews*, a unique electronic catalogue featuring the most recent United Nations system-wide audio-visual and media news, saw a 25 per cent increase in subscribers over the course of the year. A recent survey of a sample of its television and radio partners also showed strong satisfaction with the content and timely dissemination of its programmes. Respondents provided suggestions on the precise timing, format and means of distribution, which have helped to inform a more comprehensive survey to be undertaken this year, the results of which will feed directly into the Department's programme planning. Meanwhile, the Department continues to interact with and respond to the needs of the broadcasters. For instance, Radio Beijing has formulated plans to broadcast the United Nations Day concerts through a syndicate of over 20 stations in China, for which UN Radio is offering technical support.

38. Enhanced distribution is key to improved outreach and, along with most of the United Nations agencies active in the audio-visual field, the Department has led efforts to develop new ways for broadcasters to access its products. These efforts have culminated in an important new initiative which will enable the Department and audio-visual producers throughout the United Nations system to distribute video material promptly from Headquarters and from the field to broadcasters. APTN, the world's largest television news agency, with over 500 subscribers, has offered the United Nations 10 minutes of free satellite time, five days a week, to be broadcast twice a day on their Global Video Wire. The Department will put together this daily programming with material shot by its own television and video crews and from footage provided by United Nations system partners. While APTN and other broadcast syndicators regularly feed live coverage supplied by UN Television of significant events at Headquarters, the Organization has never before had the

capacity to reach so many broadcasters every day with footage showing the gamut of United Nations activities.

39. Some 10 new significant television partners have joined the growing number of international television partners airing DPI productions. Over the past year, the Department has also worked to increase the placement of public service announcements on United Nations priority issues. Of particular note was the successful television spot series with Forum Barcelona, whose 13 spots were distributed to 175 television stations worldwide and television spots on the United Nations International Day of Peace from the A&E History channel, and United States cable partners, such as Cable Positive, the United States cable and telecommunications industry's AIDS action programme, have agreed to distribute spots on HIV/AIDS to a wide range of outlets free of charge and on a regular basis. Discussions are also under way with stations on a series of spots commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations.

40. Growing interest in United Nations material by the commercial broadcast industry has also been demonstrated by the Department's consultative role on several film and television projects. A two-part film and television series project on the Organization, its past and present roles and their implications for its future role in the world, is being developed by an independent French producer. A collaboration is also in progress with Scholastic, a major United States educational publishing and media entity with interest in international projects. A documentary on the founding of the United Nations has been undertaken as an international co-production, and with DPI assistance, Beijing television has undertaken a unique series of films on United Nations Goodwill Ambassadors and Ambassadors of Peace.

41. Active promotion of the Department's products is another vital element to successful outreach and its efforts in this regard are bearing fruit. The Department, through its participation in the MIPTV, the leading annual international television programming market, was also able to facilitate access by international broadcasters to recent productions, footage and photo services available with United Nations system organizations. This has resulted in more co-productions, including: *Genesis*, co-produced by the United Nations Environment Programme and Teleimages (France); *Staying Alive*, co-produced by the World Bank and MTV; and an upcoming co-production between the Department and al Jazeera; as well as Harmony Gold's special animated UN60 television spot.

B. Print products

42. Confirming the continued relevance of print products, the Department has issued a new, revised edition of *Basic Facts About the United Nations*. This invaluable book provides a comprehensive yet concise overview of the multifarious activities of the United Nations system, including its work in the political, economic, social and humanitarian spheres, its continuing advancement of human rights and international law, and its successes in the area of decolonization. This completely updated, internet-friendly edition, provides a bird's eye view of how the far-flung members of the United Nations system work together in support of the progress and well-being of life on our planet.

C. United Nations web site

43. The United Nations web site, which continues to be visited heavily by users from all over the world, remains the primary source of information about the Organization and its activities. The *UN News Centre* web site, a portal that provides easy access to the latest news and related resources on the work of the United Nations system for an ever-growing worldwide audience, has continued to grow. The *News Centre*'s effectiveness as a source of news was evidenced by its expanding "link popularity" as more and more external sites, including major media outlets, government agencies and NGOs created direct links to its homepage and thematic segments, or featured its news stories on their pages. For instance, within days of the launch of the *UN News Centre*'s special page on the tsunami disaster, links to it appeared on a variety of web sites, from *The Guardian* newspaper (United Kingdom) to *AcademicInfo.net* and the Science and Development Network (*ScieDev.net*).

44. The expanding reach of the Department's news services on the Web was also shown by the increase in the number of subscribers to the e-mail news service, which by December 2004 exceeded 33,500 for English and French combined, a 50 per cent increase over the previous year. The success of the *UN News Centre*'s e-mail alerts, coupled with similar services for the *UN Webcast* and for *UN Photos*, has necessitated a re-evaluation of the technical requirements for this service in regard to the underlying infrastructural capacity required to handle the volume of outgoing e-mail. As a consequence, the extension of the e-mail news alert system to all languages on the *UN News Centre* has been postponed until later in 2005.

45. Detailed information on the United Nations web site is included in the Secretary-General's report on that subject, submitted for consideration by the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session (A/AC.198/2005/5).

V. Outreach services: strengthening civil society partnerships

46. At Headquarters and in the field, activities organized by the Department are increasingly tied to partnerships with civil society, as well as with the United Nations system. The Department has been working with additional vigour to take United Nations messages and resources to civil society, in particular by building partnerships with NGOs, educators, students and representatives of the media and private sector, in an increasingly integrated fashion, using a variety of both established and innovative channels. In a range of areas, outreach has been enhanced by electronic communications via the Internet and virtual meetings with remote partners through live webcasts and videoconferences.

A. Outreach to civil society and non-governmental organizations

47. The Non-Governmental Organization Section of the Department, which works with over 1,500 associated NGOs, continues to build partnerships that strengthen the Organization's ties with civil society, to professionalize and enhance NGO interaction with the United Nations and to provide opportunities for NGO networking in support of the work of the Organization. In addition to an increasingly sophisticated information programme featuring weekly NGO briefings,

communications workshops and a Resource Centre, the Annual DPI/NGO Conference is now widely recognized as the premier NGO event at Headquarters each year, anticipated by NGOs around the world.

48. In 2004, the Annual NGO Conference, entitled "Millennium Development Goals: Civil Society Takes Action" (8-10 September 2004) focused on the Organization's effort to increase partnerships with civil society in support of the Millennium Development Goals. The Conference was attended by 1,800 NGO representatives from 555 organizations based in 66 countries. The DPI/NGO organizers of the Conference took into account the reforms that are under way to enhance the participation of civil society partners, in keeping with the recommendations of the High-level Panel on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. Emphasizing NGO feedback on the Millennium Development Goals campaigns, the Conference featured for the first time a plenary "public hearing" on the final day of the meeting, designed to transmit concerns and recommendations to United Nations and government officials. The Conference was accessible through an interactive web site that received 1,562 visits (an increase of 200 per cent from 2003). In addition, United Nations information centres organized parallel meetings, seminars and conferences inspired by the DPI/NGO Conference theme. Such meetings took place at information centres in Tehran, Dakar, Asuncion, Moscow, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago, Chile, and at Rutgers University in the United States. The result of this outreach was reflected by the extensive media coverage of the three-day event: over 150 press items appeared in all media, representing a 170 per cent increase over the previous conference.

B. Educational outreach

49. The Educational Outreach Section, through innovative public and private partnerships, has strengthened the connections between DPI and educators, students and the public. The Global Teaching and Learning project, for example, developed a Peace Bell initiative co-sponsored with European Schoolnet (a consortium of 26 ministries of education in the European Union) and the Earth Society Foundation, where hundreds of schools all over Europe participated in activities that focused on peace education, and a Youth Visioning for Island Living art contest, co-sponsored by UNESCO that gave children and youth living on small islands the opportunity to illustrate their vision for the future of their islands. The UN Works programme also continued to leverage its media partnerships to create outreach that focused on the Organization's impact on the lives of ordinary people. During the Barcelona Forum's International Youth Festival in August 2004, an episode of the Showtime television series *What's Going On?*, hosted by the actress Meg Ryan, generated discussion by an audience of hundreds of young people about how they could help break cycles of violence and be agents of change in their own communities. The 10-part series is proving an invaluable resource for educators and NGOs involved in public outreach campaigns on key issues. Another media outreach partnership with Discovery and UNESCO highlights cultural diversity and endangered languages in 20 television spots broadcast around the world.

50. The field of journalism remains a critical area for building partnerships for the Organization. The Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists' Fellowship Programme (formerly the DPI Training Programme for Broadcasters and Journalists from

Developing Countries) continues to address the needs of journalists from developing countries. By providing comprehensive knowledge about the work and activities of the United Nations along with an opportunity to cover the activities of the General Assembly, the programme has helped to create long-term, informed interest in the United Nations among those participating in the programme. Since the programme's inception in 1981, more than 350 journalists from 152 countries have participated.

51. Another established area of outreach, the guided tour operation, continued its ongoing collaboration with NGOs and the private sector. In 2004, the Department reached an agreement with a clothing company on the donation of uniforms for the tour guides that enabled it to enhance the public image of this dynamic and highly visible group of staff. Visitor attendance to guided tours also continued to increase in 2004, reflecting more visiting school groups as well as an overall growth in the tourism industry in New York City. While 323,000 visitors took a guided tour in 2003, the number increased to 360,000, or by 11.4 per cent, in 2004. Meanwhile, complementing the guided tours, the Department's Group Programmes Unit continued to organize a full calendar of briefing programmes for visitors. In 2004, it registered an increase of 13.8 per cent in groups receiving in-house briefings (from 376 to 428) with an increase of 17.4 per cent in participants reached (from 27,641 to 32,442).

52. Special programmes organized by the Department are often the result of partnerships with civil society, as well as with the United Nations system. The official observance of World AIDS Day in December 2004 was again co-sponsored by the Department, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the African Services Committee, with the assistance and support of several NGOs, foundations and private companies. For the second year, this event has been held outside United Nations Headquarters at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City and has been open to the public. Thanks to the public venue and the extended outreach afforded by its co-sponsors, the event received broad media coverage and drew nearly four times as large an audience as attended past World AIDS Day observances held at Headquarters. The International Day of Peace is now being observed on 21 September through an expanded videoconference programme, which brings together non-governmental representatives and students from some 40 countries with young people at peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Sierra Leone. Similarly, the student observance of World Environment Day in 2004 was organized as a multi-site videoconference programme with participants in Australia, Croatia, Greece, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States of America.

VI. Library services: implementing knowledge services

53. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library, through the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries, is actively working with other libraries of the Organization to review United Nations library activities and produce timely, concrete results. The result of this collaboration, a report describing new strategic directions for United Nations libraries, has been submitted to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session (A/AC.198/2005/4) for its consideration. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library also hosted a meeting of United Nations system libraries, where participants agreed to collaborate on the development of a central gateway to all United Nations system

library resources to replace the United Nations System Shared Cataloguing and Public Access System.

54. The Library has also initiated an internal reorganization of its services as a first step in reviewing and streamlining its technical work and to support the reorientation of its activities to foster knowledge management activities. Within the Library, a new section, Knowledge Sharing Services, has been created. This section will provide internal information management consulting services to Secretariat offices and permanent missions to help their staff make better use of information management tools and methods.

55. The Library has continued in its operational programme to provide access to United Nations official documents to the Secretariat and Member States, in both hard copy and electronic form, and through a rapid reference service that identifies official documents and assists in their effective use. The Library continued its digitization efforts to enlarge the range of documents in the Official Documents System. This is a step forward in ensuring that the system becomes a more complete repository of United Nations documentation. Although the purchase of hard copies of books and periodicals has diminished owing to budget constraints, the Library continues to maintain a multilingual collection, including publications on peace and security and development-related issues. It also facilitates access to multilingual information sources on the Internet. The Library has continued its popular series of training programmes in the use of United Nations information resources, extending the reach and impact of these programmes through the organization of a regional training workshop for African depository libraries in Addis Ababa in December 2004.

VII. Conclusions

56. The reorientation of DPI, launched in 2002 with the reform proposals of the Secretary-General, is now complete. The Department has implemented those aspects of the comprehensive review of its work which are within the authority of the Secretary-General and are based on existing General Assembly resolutions and guidance provided by the Committee on Information. The future reports of the Secretary-General on questions relating to public information, which will focus on the overall activities of the Department in the priority areas set by the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, will therefore be renamed to reflect this.

57. The sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations this year — a time of reflection and renewal — presents DPI with an excellent opportunity to tell the United Nations story in a more dynamic way to more people around the world than ever before. This is a time not only to tell our story, it is also a time to better equip the Organization for today's challenges and to gain public support for its vital work. It is a time to reinforce the relevance of the United Nations in today's world.

58. As former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld said in his 1959 speech entitled "Do we need the United Nations?": "We need the Organization ... as a foundation and a framework for arduous and time-consuming attempts to find forms in which an extranational — or perhaps even supranational — influence may be brought to bear in the prevention of future conflicts." His wise words remain true today.

59. The Department of Public Information is well prepared to take on the challenge of telling the story of a renewed and revitalized United Nations. To do this effectively, it needs the support of Member States and, in particular, the Committee on Information, its partner in this vital task.

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Further rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 57/300, 58/101 B and 59/126 B, the present report provides information on the implementation of the regionalization initiative in Western Europe and in other high-cost developed countries and sets out the proposed strategy for the implementation of the initiative in other regions.

Section II of the report presents an analysis of the current resources available to the network of United Nations information centres. Section III provides an analysis of the resources that would be required for the implementation of the regionalization model as proposed in document A/AC.198/2004/3, and includes information on the operation of the regional United Nations information centre in Brussels. Section IV presents the proposal for the implementation of a regional strategic communications model with a realignment of the network of United Nations information centres, taking into account current financial, political and geographic realities. Subsection A focuses on the situation in other high-cost developed countries and in countries with economies in transition and subsection B covers the situation in developing countries.

Section V concludes that the proposed strategic regional approach to communications will enable the Department to make the most effective use of its existing resources to achieve greater impact. The Department of Public Information intends to keep this process dynamic, and will continue to make the necessary adjustments as priorities change. It also affirms that the views of the Committee on Information will be taken fully into account as it develops further plans to extend the regional concept in developing countries, in consultation with the regional groups and individual Member States concerned.

* Submission of this document was delayed, owing to the need for extensive internal consultations.

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I. Introduction

1. In resolution 59/126 B of 10 December 2004, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a progress report on the implementation of the proposal to rationalize the network of United Nations information centres around regional hubs with the objective of applying this initiative in other regions, in consultation with Member States, where this initiative would strengthen the flow and exchange of information in developing countries. In that resolution, the General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session on the rationalization of United Nations information centres in Western Europe and other high-cost developed countries. It also stressed that the special needs and requirements of developing countries in the field of information and communications technology are important factors for the effective flow of information in those countries. Furthermore, the General Assembly affirmed that these measures and objectives, which are central to future rationalization of United Nations information centres, must be carried out in consultation, on a case-by-case basis, with all concerned Member States in which existing information centres are located, the countries served by those information centres and other interested countries in the region, taking into consideration the distinctive characteristics of each region. The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to report on the progress made in the consolidation of the United Nations field presence in a single United Nations house. The present report will address the issues raised and the actions requested in the above-mentioned resolution.

2. Underlying further rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres is the Department's strategic approach to communications, emphasizing the use of new technologies, expanded partnerships, and a reallocation of resources to achieve greater overall impact. This approach also takes into account the practical concerns and geographic realities facing such a global network. In developing its plans, the Department of Public Information reaffirms its commitment to a process of consultation with the regional groups and individual Member States concerned.

3. The Department's analysis of the current situation in the field and of the various proposals for further rationalization reveals that further progress towards regionalization would require a level of funding not currently available to the Department. The unanticipated reduction of US$ 2 million from the biennium 2004-2005 allocation for the United Nations information centres drained resources that were intended for strengthening centres in developing countries and facilitating the creation of regional hubs. In addition, rising operational expenditures, such as rent, maintenance and utilities, have further strained the centres' budgets.

4. In the face of these concerns, the Department is recommending a strategic recalibration of the existing network. Key information centres in each region will be strengthened to enable them to play a greater role in providing broad strategic communications guidance, coordination and support to centres in that region. This would help focus the work of information centres on priority thematic issues and concerns of particular relevance in each region, and would help the Department better fulfil its mission statement by communicating more strategically to achieve the greatest public impact in the field.

II. Analysis of the current resources available to the network of United Nations information centres

5. As has previously been explained (see A/AC.198/2004/3), the steady decrease in resources available to United Nations information centres has severely constrained their operational capacities, prompting consideration of regionalization as a means of consolidating resources from several small offices into larger hubs. This concept has been predicated on the assumption that such consolidation would release sufficient resources to permit the establishment of viable regional centres. Regrettably, a number of factors have served to reduce the funds available for the centres' operational needs. The information centres must absorb increased expenses associated with rising fuel prices and other utilities, including the costs of shared premises and rent. Security in the field is another concern that has taken on added importance in recent years, and this too, has absorbed some of the resources that would otherwise have been available for programmatic activity. (It should be noted, however, that funding now provided separately under security phases I and II is expected to largely address these requirements.) In addition, many of the information centres, particularly in developing countries, are adversely affected by the cost recovery system of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), under which UNDP bills information centres for services provided. This new procedure was implemented beginning in August 2003, after the budget for the current biennium had been submitted. Therefore, no allocation for this expenditure was included.

6. As noted above, the information centres' budgetary situation was further adversely affected in December 2003 with the unexpected decision by the General Assembly, at the recommendation of the Fifth Committee, to reduce by $2 million the appropriation to these offices for the biennium 2004-2005. These were funds that the Department had anticipated would be available to help strengthen the centres' outreach capacity, particularly in developing countries. Also, the Department has had to redirect funds normally intended to cover costs more directly associated with programmatic activity, such as communications, printing, translation and travel, to meet rising overhead expenses. In addition, the Department continues to absorb costs associated with the closure of the information centres in Western Europe, owing to residual contractual obligations at those locations.

7. The current financial situation has had an impact on the ability of the centres not only to perform their public information work but also to provide for the upgrade and replacement of information technology equipment essential to their functioning. Since 2001, owing to budgetary limitations, the Department has been unable to replace obsolete communications equipment in information centres except in emergency cases or where the equipment was so old as to no longer be viable. In the context of the information and communication technology strategy elaborated by the Secretary-General, it is vital for United Nations information centres to have the proper technological infrastructure for the timely exchange of information with Headquarters and for communication with local partners. The majority of United Nations information centres operate stand-alone personal computers, hosting numerous applications, and they need up-to-date equipment with the capacity to handle such programme requirements. In addition, they need equipment that is capable of operating on a technical platform compatible with that of their constituencies, in particular the media, allowing for more efficient and effective

outreach. As at the end of 2004, over two thirds of the information centres' information technology and communication equipment was between 5 and 15 years old. Therefore, any replacement plan to address this situation will be very costly.

8. In addition to the financial situation described above, which has steadily worsened in real terms over the past two bienniums, the total budget allocation for the United Nations information centres has also decreased as a result of General Assembly decisions. For years, until the biennium 2002-2003, information centres accounted for between 24 and 25 per cent of the Department's budgetary allocations. In 2002-2003, that amount dropped to 23 per cent, and for the current biennium, it has further declined to 21 per cent, or $33,993,900 (including additional funding for security-related expenses).

9. In recent years, in an effort to offset reductions in posts and to provide the essential level of staffing needed to effectively operate the information centres, the Department has resorted to using general temporary assistance funds to hire local staff in some locations. However, in January 2004, the Department was instructed by the Department of Management to reverse what had become a growing reliance on such funds to meet essential operational functions, and to more strictly monitor and control their use. The redeployment of 20 local-level posts to centres in developing countries, released as a result of the closing of the United Nations information centres in Western Europe, has helped alleviate this problem.

III. Analysis of the resources needed to implement the proposed regional model

10. On the basis of the proposal to extend beyond Western Europe the regional model submitted last year to the Committee on Information in document A/AC.198/2004/3, and taking into account the experience gained through establishing the regional United Nations information centre in Brussels, the Department carried out a structural analysis for the further establishment of regional information centres as outlined in that document. Besides increased staffing requirements, the resources envisaged for each such regional centre included a provision for the production and translation of information materials, communications (including web operations and postage), as well as travel to the countries that would be covered by that centre. The analysis also included the questions of maintaining a few information centres in selected locations, largely within their current level of resource allocation, closing other centres and placing the national information officers within the offices of resident coordinators, as outlined in that plan.

11. The analysis revealed that the level of resources allocated to United Nations information centres would fall far short of meeting the requirements of an adequately resourced regional network. Additional resources would be required beyond the current biennial allocation to cover the ongoing operational costs of such a network. In addition, it can be expected, in the light of Western European experience, that substantial one-time liquidation costs, staff separation packages and start-up costs would be incurred. Moreover, the optimum staffing requirements for the operating model referred to in paragraph 10, particularly in terms of professional and national information officer posts, would considerably exceed the financial and human resources currently available to the Department. Accordingly, while the

implementation of a regional model would remain the ultimate long-term objective, the availability of resources would determine the pace of progress in that direction. Following recent cuts, and as explained in paragraphs 24 and 25 below, the resources are simply not available to pursue large-scale regionalization around the world.

12. While a majority of United Nations information centres are located in rent-free premises, the Department will continue to look into ways and means of reducing the expenditure on rental and maintenance of premises in locations where such costs consume a disproportionate share of the centre's annual budgetary allocation. It will work closely with the host Governments concerned to explore the possibility of identifying rent-free premises or making cash contributions to supplement the allocations from the regular programme budget. In cases where this is not possible, the Department will have no choice but to consider closing those offices or shifting their operations to alternative locations that are more affordable.

13. In addition, as recommended by the Office of Internal Oversight Services in its report (see A/57/747), the Department has already taken steps, in consultation with the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, to assign self-accounting responsibilities to selected United Nations information centres. This would save operational funds currently spent on UNDP cost recovery in those locations. The Department is also exploring with UNDP the possibility of excluding all United Nations information centres in developing countries from the cost recovery system, taking into account the principle of reciprocity of services, since the centres provide ongoing public information and communications support to UNDP and other members of United Nations country teams.

14. The Department has initiated discussions with UNDP on the modalities of their joint presence at the field level, including the sharing of common premises and United Nations houses. While co-location has had clear advantages in terms of promoting a unified United Nations image, those advantages are often offset by the high cost of the Department's participation in such arrangements. In addition, information centres need to be accessible to local partners. However, United Nations houses are often not centrally located or easily reached by public transportation, and heightened security considerations make public access difficult. Information centres' reference library collections and meeting facilities requirements result in the need for a considerable space allocation within the common premises. Since common costs are most often calculated on the basis of the space allocated, a centre's share of those costs is usually very high in proportion to its overall staff component. Owing to the costs involved, both for a one-time payment and for ongoing rent and common services charges, the Department was unable to join the other members of the United Nations country team last year in the new United Nations house in Manila. In Nigeria, it was decided that the United Nations information centre should remain in Lagos when most of the country team moved to the new United Nations house in Abuja, owing mainly to the high moving costs involved, which could not be sustained from the Department's budget for information centre operations.

15. The experience gained so far in the establishment and functioning of the regional United Nations information centre in Brussels is also relevant to any further rationalization plan. While it is still too early to provide a complete assessment and lessons learned, the following observations are pertinent. The

regional United Nations information centre opened on 1 January 2004 and moved to its permanent rent-free premises provided by the Government of Belgium in July 2004. Logistical arrangements, including the set-up of information technology and communications equipment, the creation of a local area network and the installation of the reference library collection, were not fully operational until later in the year. Since then, the staff have developed the necessary working environment to enable them to assume a leading role in implementing a more robust, coherent and coordinated public information programme in the region, envisaged as part of the new, more strategic approach to the Organization's communications efforts at the field level.

16. Every effort was made to transfer staff from the nine United Nations information centres in Western Europe that closed on 31 December 2003 to the new regional centre in order to benefit from their skills, experience and institutional memory, to give a jump start to the new operation and to ensure the continuity of United Nations communications efforts in the region. The recruitment for all professional positions is now complete. It is expected that the regional centre will soon be able to fully concentrate on the task of further refining and implementing an effective regional communications strategy aimed at key audiences in Western Europe, with a view to providing a regional perspective to United Nations objectives and concerns.

17. In view of the variety of languages spoken in the region, the centre continues to use the assistance of volunteers, including student interns, to support its information efforts. In addition, discussions are under way with Governments in the region to post junior professional officers to assist in the outreach to audiences in specific countries covered by the centre.

18. As part of the agreement to establish the centre in Brussels, the Government of Belgium generously pledged an annual contribution of $50,000 for the translation and production of information materials by the new office. The host Government has also pledged to contribute to the high cost of the maintenance of the premises. The Government of France has pledged a voluntary contribution in support of the communications activities for that country and some other Governments in the region are expected to follow suit, enabling the regional information centre to strengthen its activities in the countries covered.

19. The report of the Secretary-General on the continuing reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications (A/AC.198/2005/2) provides further information on the programmatic aspects of the work of the regional United Nations information centre in Brussels.

IV. Implementation of a regional strategic communications model through a realignment of the network of United Nations information centres

20. Given all the factors outlined above, the Department will proceed to systematically extend a more strategic communications approach to the network of United Nations information centres. This approach is in keeping with the organizational structure put in place with the reorientation of the Department beginning in November 2002, which located the United Nations information centres

within the Strategic Communications Division. It will be based on a more regional approach to its public information work at the country level, with the development of regional communications strategies to promote the goals and key activities of the United Nations, and the development of public information activities and materials focusing on priority thematic issues and concerns of the region. To facilitate this, adjustments will be made to the current network of United Nations information centres, including a reallocation of posts, with a view to strengthening its operations and ensuring optimal use of resources within the current budgetary allocation.

21. The Department has begun to develop this regional communications approach starting with the Middle East and Arab region. Two communications workshops were held in 2003 and 2004 with the participation of information staff of United Nations information centres, as well as of information professionals from other United Nations organizations working in the region. This initiative, undertaken in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), led to the adoption of a regional communications strategy that calls for coordinated public information activities to explain the Organization's role on priority issues of concern in the region.

22. The Department plans a similar approach in other regions, working with the respective regional commissions and other organizations of the United Nations system to develop and implement joint United Nations information strategies. The initial steps have already been taken in many locations, where local communications groups have been established to coordinate a unified communications effort of the United Nations country team as a whole, under the leadership of the staff of the Department. To supplement these efforts and make progress in the development of a targeted communications strategy for sub-Saharan Africa, the Department is planning to hold a communications workshop in 2005 for information staff of United Nations information centres and information professionals of other United Nations organizations working in that region. This workshop will be funded through an extrabudgetary contribution. Similar workshops in other regions would follow, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources.

23. An essential element of the progress towards further physical regionalization of the network of United Nations information centres will be the support of the Member States directly affected by this exercise. After a careful review of the merits of each particular situation, and taking into account the distinctive characteristics of different regions, the Department will continue its consultations with regional groups and with the Member States concerned with a view to extending the regional concept wherever this approach would strengthen the flow and exchange of information.

24. At the same time, the Department confronts a central dilemma. The creation of regional hubs requires the reallocation of funds released by the closing of national information centres. This presumes that the level of operational resources available would be adequate for the establishment of viable regional hubs.

25. However, as outlined in paragraph 11, and with the resources currently available, the Department recognizes that it is impossible to create regional hubs comparable to the model used for Western Europe, as was envisaged in document A/AC.198/2004/3. It also recognizes that the closure of information centres located in rent-free premises, and the abolition of local-level posts in developing countries, will not generate sufficient resources to compensate for the higher operational costs

of the regional hubs, which would be expected to cover numerous countries without support at the national level. The establishment of the regional United Nations information centre in Brussels points to the need for resources both for closing costs of United Nations information centres and for increased travel from regional United Nations information centres. Moreover, in many developing countries, outreach in the traditional media, which relies on a continued presence on the ground, remains essential.

26. In the present circumstances, the Department continues to explore other measures to underpin its regional outreach. The recruitment of highly qualified national information staff, who are able to provide a local voice to global United Nations messages in local languages, is critical to the effective delivery of the Department's communications messages. However, since the introduction of the national information officer category in the network of United Nations information centres in 1994-1995, the number of such posts has not matched the emerging needs. Accordingly, in its realignment of resources within the network, the Department would seek approval in the future, through the appropriate budgetary process, for the conversion of nine information assistant posts to the national information officer level. The benefits of the proposed conversion to the communications work of the United Nations country teams far outweigh the minimal costs involved to achieve this. Indeed, as part of the realignment of the network of information centres, the Department proposes to have the national information officer as its most senior staff member in all locations where its international staff would not be deployed.

27. Furthermore, as recommended by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (recommendation 18 of the internal audit report of 14 October 2002), the Department is seeking to introduce the national officer C grade (in addition to the current A and B grades) to the network, so as to retain highly qualified national information staff and provide them with a career development opportunity. It should be noted that this, and higher levels, have been widely used in other United Nations organizations working in the field to identify and retain highly qualified and motivated national staff.

A. Developed countries and countries with economies in transition

28. In addition to Western Europe, the Department maintains information centres in Sydney, Tokyo and Washington, D.C. Four other centres are operating in countries with economies in transition, located in Bucharest, Moscow, Prague and Warsaw.

29. Further to an agreement reached with the Government of Australia in 2004 to relocate the information centre in Sydney to rent-free premises in Canberra, the Secretariat is working closely with the Australian authorities to implement the agreement as soon as possible and to proceed with the move. This will release funds that are currently used to pay the rental of premises for programme activities to enable the centre to more effectively meet its regional responsibilities. Subject to consultations with the Member States concerned, this centre could also be given responsibility for providing information services to Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, in addition to New Zealand and the seven Pacific countries it currently serves, provided that adequate resources are available for this purpose.

30. The United Nations information centre in Tokyo continues to play an important role in promoting the work of the United Nations in Japan, with the generous support of the host Government. Effective in 2005, the Government has pledged to increase its annual extrabudgetary contribution to the centre to $350,000.

31. The United Nations Information Centre in Washington, D.C., plays a vital liaison role with the host country of the United Nations and serves a broad constituency, including the United States Administration and Congress, media, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and the general public. As the lease for the centre's premises is due to expire later this year, negotiations have been initiated to secure a new lease for a smaller space at a reduced cost.

32. The information centre in Moscow has been playing an effective role as a hub for the production of information materials in Russian and has been coordinating the translation and sharing of information products in that language with offices in other countries where Russian is spoken. This centre could be expected to expand its regional role in the future, in consultation with the Governments concerned. The Department is initiating contacts with the Government of the Russian Federation with a view to identifying rent-free or rent-subsidized premises to reduce the current high rental cost in that location.

33. The information centres in Bucharest, Prague and Warsaw, all of which benefit from rent-free (or symbolic cost) premises in addition to other extrabudgetary support from their host Governments, play an important communications role in their respective countries and work closely with other members of United Nations country teams in their locations. The United Nations Information Service in Vienna, in addition to its other responsibilities, provides broad strategic communications guidance to those centres. In view of the low cost of the operations, and pending consultations with the Member States concerned regarding the options to be considered in the future, as well as the status of UNDP offices in those capitals, the Secretary-General proposes to retain the present arrangements there for the time being, as well as in Ankara, where an information centre works under the leadership of the resident coordinator.

B. Developing countries

34. The Department operates 47 United Nations information centres in developing countries. Of these, four centres are currently not operational: Kabul, Kinshasa, Managua and Monrovia. The centres in Kabul and Managua have not been operational for some time and have been closed. The information centres in Kinshasa and Monrovia were temporarily closed in 2004 because of the crippling financial costs of maintaining a presence in locations where security and other concerns have exponentially increased operating expenditures, while security precautions had left those centres inaccessible to visitors. At the same time, the information components of United Nations peacekeeping missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Liberia carry out the role that the information centres in those locations had played in the past.

35. Of the 43 remaining centres in developing countries, 19 are headed by staff from the Department of Public Information, 23 by resident coordinators, and one by a staff member of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The information centres in developing countries have 20 Professional posts, 33 national

information officer posts and 136 General Service posts. Following the regionalization exercise in Western Europe, three posts at the D-1 level were released for deployment to other regions and have been allocated to Cairo, Mexico City and Pretoria.

1. African States

36. There are a total of 18 information centres in sub-Saharan Africa located in Accra, Antananarivo, Brazzaville, Bujumbura, Dakar, Dar es Salaam, Harare, Kinshasa (not operational), Lagos, Lomé, Lusaka, Maseru, Monrovia (not operational), Nairobi, Ouagadougou, Pretoria, Windhoek and Yaoundé. Five of the centres in Africa are headed by staff of the Department of Public Information (Accra, Dakar, Harare, Lagos and Pretoria). In addition, the Department provides the post of the Deputy Director at the United Nations information centre in Nairobi, which is headed by the Director of Communications and Public Information of UNEP and has an information officer in the centre in Dar es Salaam.

37. Taking into account the views of the Member States concerned regarding the need to maintain the Department's physical presence on the ground, wherever possible, in the light of the special needs of developing countries in the field of public information and communications, as well as in view of the low operational cost of most centres in Africa, the Department would propose to retain its current offices in this region for the time being.

38. In order to meet the geopolitical and linguistic needs of the region, and to provide more effective strategic communications guidance to the distinctive subregions of the continent, the Department proposes a realignment of its staff resources at the Professional level, following the subregional model established by the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the African Union. Accordingly, the centres in Dakar, Lagos, Nairobi, Pretoria and Yaoundé would assume a broader subregional programmatic mandate and take on a coordinating role in providing strategic communications guidance and support to existing United Nations information centres in Africa, in close cooperation with other United Nations organizations active on the ground.

39. The proposals for the regionalization of the network of United Nations information centres in Africa presented to the Committee on Information in 2004 in document A/AC.198/2004/3 included the redeployment of a D-1 post released from the regionalization of the United Nations information centres in Western Europe to a new regional United Nations information centre in Addis Ababa. The analysis of the resource requirements for creating such an information centre revealed that the resources available would not allow for the implementation of such a proposal at this time, while the mere redeployment of a senior post, without adequate support staff or operational resources, would serve no purpose. It has therefore been decided to seek to fulfil the United Nations public information needs in Addis Ababa through enhanced cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), a subject of several consultations between the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information and the Executive Secretary of ECA. Accordingly, this D-1 post is being deployed to the United Nations information centre in Pretoria, to allow that centre to assume a coordinating role and added regional programmatic responsibilities, which include providing strategic communications guidance and support to all United Nations

information centres in sub-Saharan Africa. The P-5 post of centre Director in Pretoria will then be moved to Yaoundé to enhance strategic communications guidance and support in French-speaking Africa.

40. The Department has carefully reviewed the available resources within the programme budget for the current biennium, with a view to taking into account the needs of Portuguese-speaking African countries and the offer made by the Government of Angola to open a United Nations information centre in Luanda. Given the overall budgetary situation of the United Nations information centres, there are no resources available within the regular programme budget to meet the cost of opening and operating an additional centre within the allocation for the current biennium. Accordingly, either an additional appropriation to the regular programme budget of the Organization or an extrabudgetary contribution at a level to be determined in consultation with the Member States concerned would be required to meet the one-time and recurrent operating costs of such an office.

2. Asian States

41. There are currently 11 information centres in the Asian States, located in Colombo, Dhaka, Islamabad, Jakarta, Kabul (now closed), Kathmandu, Manila, New Delhi, Tehran, Tokyo and Yangon. Five of the centres are headed by staff members of the Department of Public Information (Islamabad, Jakarta, New Delhi, Tehran and Tokyo). In addition, an information officer of the Department is outposted to the United Nations Information Services at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) under the responsibility of the Chief of that service.

42. In view of the size of the continent and its geopolitical and linguistic complexity — ESCAP has 53 members — no changes are envisaged in this region at this time. However, a reallocation of existing post resources to strengthen the regional responsibilities of the United Nations Information Services Bangkok is being pursued.

43. It should be noted that most centres in this region benefit from low-rent or rent-free premises. The Department will initiate discussions with the host Governments in selected locations with a view to identifying rent-free premises where they do not currently exist or obtaining rental subsidies, thus allowing for savings to be redirected to outreach activities.

3. Latin American and Caribbean States

44. There are 10 information centres in the Latin American and Caribbean States, located in Asunción, Bogotá, Buenos Aires, La Paz, Lima, Managua (now closed), Mexico City, Panama City, Port of Spain and Rio de Janeiro. Five information centres are headed by the staff of the Department: Bogotá, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Port of Spain and Rio de Janeiro, while the others are headed by resident coordinators.

45. The Department proposes that the United Nations information centre in Mexico City, headed by a Director at the D-1 level, assume the coordinating role in providing strategic communications guidance to the entire region. The Department has initiated consultations with the Government of Mexico with a view to

identifying suitable rent-free premises or securing a generous extrabudgetary contribution to reduce the considerable operational cost of this centre.

46. The United Nations information centre in Port of Spain, covering 13 Member States, has in effect been functioning as the regional centre for the English-speaking Caribbean region. The Department intends to initiate discussions with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the other Members States concerned, with a view to securing rent-free premises for this centre or a subsidy to cover the high rental cost in this location. The resulting savings would be used to increase the budgetary allocation for outreach, including travel, thus ensuring periodic visits to the geographically vast area covered by the centre.

47. The United Nations information centre in Buenos Aires would assume broader subregional communications responsibilities in South America. The Department's operational cost in this media hub is very low in view of its centrally located, rent-free premises and an extrabudgetary Government contribution that covers maintenance costs. The information centre in Rio de Janeiro, a key media hub, is located in rent-free premises and plays an important role in reaching a variety of constituencies in Brazil. It also extends essential communications support to the remainder of the United Nations country team (in Brasilia), providing it with the contacts and the venue for its communications activities.

48. In view of the fact that the remaining information centres in the region are relatively low-cost operations and play an active role in their respective communities, it is proposed that they be retained for the time being.

4. League of Arab States region

49. Information centres are located in nine capitals of the States members of the League of Arab States: Algiers, Beirut, Cairo, Khartoum, Manama, Rabat, Sana'a, Tripoli and Tunis. The centres in Beirut, Cairo and Sana'a are currently headed by staff of the Department who serve as Directors, while others are headed by resident coordinators. The Department also has an information officer outposted to ESCWA.

50. A Director at the D-1 level will soon be appointed to head the United Nations information centre in Cairo, which will assume a regional coordinating role in the production of information materials in Arabic and the targeted dissemination of United Nations messages in the region. A P-5 post released following the regionalization of the centres in Western Europe has been redeployed for the post of Director of the United Nations information centre in Beirut and the selection process for this position is under way. It is also proposed that, in view of the low cost of their operation, the remaining centres in this region be retained for the time being, pending further review of their operations and effectiveness, within the framework of the new regional communications strategy outlined in paragraph 21 above.

V. Conclusion

51. As explained above, the Department will proceed systematically to extend a regional strategic approach to communications to the rest of the network of United Nations information centres. As part of that approach, and working within its current budgetary allocation, the Department will undertake a strategic realignment of existing staff resources within the network in order to enhance it and make it

more effective for greater impact. As part of that concept, information centres in certain key locations will assume broader programmatic responsibilities and provide strategic communications guidance and support to other offices within their region. The Department will retain the flexibility to keep this process dynamic and continue to make the necessary adjustments as priorities change.

52. While proceeding with the implementation of the regional approach to communications, the Department lacks the necessary staff and budgetary resources to physically implement the regional model at the operational level. An initial structural analysis of regionalization of the centres in developing countries, as outlined in A/AC.198/2004/3, reveals that the anticipated costs would far exceed available resources and therefore would not be a viable alternative to the existing structure at this time. The redeployment of three posts at the D-1 level and 20 local-level posts to centres in developing countries has enhanced the ability of the network to meet the communications challenges in the regions where presence on the ground remains important to an effective United Nations outreach to key constituencies. Many centres in developing countries already operate at a low cost, and can enhance their impact on target audiences through more strategic communications support at the regional level.

53. In addition, as indicated above, an adequate level of operational resources is essential for progress towards a broader realignment of the network of United Nations information centres in consultation with regional groups and individual Member States concerned.

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Modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries: new strategic directions

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

United Nations libraries are making a coordinated effort to ensure that their activities and services are fully supporting the Organization's current goals and objectives. Technology and organizational change have provided opportunities for United Nations libraries to move from independent repositories to take up a new role as a network of knowledge-sharing communities: from collections to connections, moving from building and maintaining book and periodical collections to facilitating a knowledge-enabled environment and the exchange of information among stakeholders.

United Nations libraries are redeveloping their products and services, physical spaces, staff skills and working relationships with their colleagues within the Organization to offer timely and relevant support to their growing constituencies. They are also redeploying and renewing the skill sets of their staff to meet the needs of this challenging new work environment. The libraries will be in the forefront of the use of information technology to meet the increasing demand for reliable information resources that support global problem-solving. The new model will help clients select the most useful, relevant and authoritative information they need, when they need it. Increasingly, United Nations libraries will emphasize personalized service and direct support to constituents by knowledge consultants and advisers, resulting in more effective use of information.

While retaining important traditional library functions and services, including selective paper-based collections, United Nations libraries will be better equipped to meet the information needs of their diverse clientele in today's continually changing and challenging information environment, an environment in which knowledge workers are challenged by the information overload caused by the ever-increasing number and complexity of issues.

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United Nations libraries are using innovative approaches, tools and skills to promote the relevance and value of the rich resources they steward. They are becoming networking facilitators, essential team members in the United Nations community of knowledge workers.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 59/126 B, the General Assembly welcomed the progress reported by the Secretary-General in his report on the modernization and integrated management of United Nations libraries and in-depth review of library activities (see A/AC.198/2004/4), took note of paragraph 50 of resolution 58/270, in which it had requested the Secretary-General to conduct, through the Office of Internal Oversight Services, a review of the operation and management of United Nations libraries, with a view to assessing staffing requirements for those libraries in the light of technological advances in the delivery of information services, to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session and to transmit that report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session. In September 2004, the Office of Internal Oversight Services, in its report to the General Assembly (A/59/373, para. 38), recommended that in order to ensure sustained and effective collaboration among the libraries, the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries (henceforth the Steering Committee) should develop and propose a new United Nations library policy for approval by the Assembly. The new policy should address, inter alia, the future role of the United Nations libraries in the light of advanced technologies, including the Internet, and seek to clarify the mandate of the Steering Committee and its funding sources.

2. The present report, submitted pursuant to resolution 59/126 B, defines strategic directions for the libraries that serve the United Nations Secretariat, its bodies, Member States and its broader constituency. Led by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in New York and the Library at the United Nations Office at Geneva, with contributions from the other United Nations libraries, the present report provides a picture of how United Nations libraries are transforming themselves in order to participate in today's global community, in which information and knowledge are crucial to decision-making. Additional information on library activities, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 59/126 B, is provided in the report of the Secretary-General on the continuing reorientation of the Department of Public Information (A/AC.198/2005/2).

3. This report discusses the United Nations libraries that are members of the Steering Committee (see annex). There are, in addition, libraries in other programmes and hundreds of small and field libraries embedded in United Nations offices, including the United Nations information centres, in more than 100 countries. It is anticipated that many of the changes outlined in this report will affect all of the libraries that serve the United Nations community.

II. Libraries in the United Nations environment

4. The United Nations library community has a broad membership that includes the libraries of the United Nations system and depository libraries. Since 1946, in order to ensure universal access to essential information in the field of peace and security, human rights, economic and social development, humanitarian affairs and international law, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library has coordinated the distribution of United Nations documents and publications to users around the world through its depository library network of more than 400 libraries in over 140 countries. Each library in this network maintains a collection of United Nations materials that starts

from the date of designation as a depository library. Using these collections, the general public can consult United Nations documents and publications free of charge.

5. United Nations libraries play a role similar to that of national libraries in that they are responsible for preserving and maintaining access to all the materials published by the Organization at all duty stations, as directed by the mandate of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library:

> "The Library's primary function is to enable the delegations, Secretariat and other official groups of the Organization to obtain, with the greatest possible speed, convenience and economy, the library materials and information needed in the execution of their duties. The materials to be assembled and the services to be maintained will be determined by the needs of these groups" (A/C.5/298, para. 4).

6. Until the 1980s, physical distances and the time required to transmit documentation, meant that United Nations libraries operated to some degree in isolation. In addition, because there was no easy way of sharing resources, each library duplicated some of the collections and activities of the others. Obtaining current information was often a problem since, on top of the amount of time required to ship materials to the libraries of the system, cataloguing had to be recreated in each location. Library staff skills, and consequently quality of service, varied widely between locations, depending on the level of professional and technical training available. While other support services, such as financial management and human resources, standardized their services across geographical boundaries, United Nations libraries did not take the same direction. There was, nevertheless, a recognition of the role of the libraries as a useful support service.

7. In the 1990s, as desktop computers and information and communication technologies (ICT) became available at United Nations offices throughout the world, staff in all areas of the Secretariat began to take advantage of e-mail and the Internet to exchange documents and access current information. Software made it possible for staff to work more independently. By the mid-1990s, most United Nations staff members working from offices were comfortable with personal computers as a basic working tool and with ICT as tools of information-sharing.

8. Many libraries, however, were left behind in the process of adopting newer, more personalized technologies, having invested heavily in the large-scale and complex library management systems previously used in libraries in many countries. These "legacy systems" effectively kept the libraries' computing activities focused on their catalogues, which in turn kept library staff occupied in the processing aspects of library work. Meanwhile, more flexible web-based technologies were providing users with rapid access to information without the need for extensive training or a thorough understanding of technical systems.

9. Working together, the United Nations libraries maximized the impact of the time invested in these substantial systems by bringing out a bibliographic database for United Nations documentation produced by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva. This database was initially maintained on a mainframe computer application shared between New York and Geneva, which was subsequently migrated to locally maintained integrated library management systems. Libraries of the regional commissions and other offices were

invited to join in the shared indexing network and produce bibliographic records for United Nations documents produced at their respective duty stations. In addition, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library coordinated the creation and maintenance of the United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS) Thesaurus for all United Nations libraries, thereby providing a common controlled vocabulary for the description of United Nations documentation and externally acquired library materials. The multilingual thesaurus was a landmark achievement in the electronic publishing of United Nations information, permitting the retrieval of official United Nations documents by topic in all six official languages of the Organization on the Official Document System (ODS).

10. The work to produce these valuable tools was, however, like many other efforts of the library system, invisible to users and staff members outside the walls of the libraries, which found themselves, at the start of the new millennium, facing a world that was beginning to question their function and the nature of their work. The explosion of information, and the dramatically increased expectations of computer-literate users on one side of the digital divide and a larger, needier, community of users on the other side gave United Nations libraries pause: were they still working in an effective way? A series of reviews that looked at the activities of the United Nations libraries conducted between 2000 and 2004 identified management issues and made recommendations.

11. While much attention in these reviews was focused on the largest library in the network, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, it was recognized that the time had come to look at the work of all United Nations libraries and at the way they worked together. In its resolution 58/101 B, the General Assembly welcomed the establishment of the Steering Committee as a measure to improve the provision of library services. Chaired by the Department of Public Information, and working through coordinated management and collaborative policy-making, the Steering Committee was established to facilitate interdependence and foster initiatives to create a dynamic, synergistic and fully functional network of library services throughout the Organization.

12. Over time, the work of the Steering Committee, tasked with guiding and overseeing the production of a new policy for United Nations libraries, will be enhanced by the strengthened network of the United Nations library community.

III. New directions for United Nations libraries

A. From collections to connections

13. Libraries add value to individual publications and documents by analysing, organizing and making them available in their collections. As the nature of United Nations library collections changes in the face of technological advances, the potential of value added by the library will also increase, providing the opportunity for new, more relevant services.

14. United Nations documents will remain at the core of the collections of United Nations libraries and more attention and resources will be devoted not just to preserving these materials but to making them accessible and available. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library will focus staff resources on accessibility of the unique

United Nations documents collections to ensure that their unique content is put to best use.

15. The increased availability of information resources through the Internet and of books through efficient online vendors has allowed United Nations libraries to re-evaluate their collections policy. Researchers and users are visiting the library less, tending to make do with materials freely available on the web. The libraries will work with changing technologies to produce electronic collections of external materials on demand through the use of systems that provide access to multiple types of information resources held in different locations. Print collections will not disappear, although they will be smaller and more focused.

16. Providing centralized access to costly journals has always been an important function of United Nations libraries. The number of journals that can be accessed by the libraries in electronic, rather than print, format has grown by more than 50 per cent during the past 10 years. The libraries have made groundbreaking progress in joint procurement of these costly resources by using the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium to negotiate subscriptions at a lower cost to the Organization. In the coming years, vendors of electronic journals and news sources will be developing systems to allow more direct on-demand delivery of their materials directly to individual users. United Nations libraries will redirect their specialized expertise in this area to helping users to deal with the multitude of choices and to select optimal delivery mechanisms, making use of built-in tracking mechanisms to analyse and evaluate the needs of their users. All these changes, facilitated by a higher level of resource-sharing, will reduce the costly duplication of acquisitions.

17. United Nations libraries will increasingly turn to electronic sources for new information products to summarize, filter and select relevant timely information for users. Web-based products that provide personalized alerts and summaries of current information, links to expertise, searching across institutional and workgroup resources and repackaging of United Nations information for various audiences will become the work of the library staff, who previously devoted much of their time to processing tasks. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library, for example, is launching a new, more accessible web-based service providing up-to-the-minute key information and commentary on official United Nations documents. The connectivity that ICT provides will allow rapid worldwide sharing of these products.

18. The greatest change in the work of United Nations libraries will be the realignment of their services towards operational priorities. The inward focus of traditional technical library work, so necessary before the advent of the World Wide Web and e-mail, is shifting to a model of service that constantly works outwardly on making connections for its users: connections between documents and functions, connections between people and documents and connections between people and people. The role of United Nations libraries as preservers and disseminators of cultural information will be enhanced and new services will support the Secretariat's creation of a knowledge-enabling environment in and among the United Nations library system.

19. The client groups of the United Nations library system are simultaneously faced with an overwhelming amount of information to manage and a rapidly changing work environment that involves the continuous introduction of new and isolating technologies, new networks and new colleagues. The libraries will work to

help staff and delegations deal with this increasingly complex environment through direct support services, which will be addressed at the actual location of the problem.

20. The needs of individual users and small teams will be met through the introduction of Personal Knowledge Management at the Dag Hammarskjöld Library. Personal Knowledge Management is an emerging discipline that will be used in discovering knowledge gaps, team training and individual coaching in the tools and techniques provided by the Organization. Because techniques and tools are constantly evolving, Personal Knowledge Management teams will work continuously with support service units in order to ensure that users have the most appropriate tools to meet their needs and that they know how to use them.

21. Through their training programmes, United Nations libraries have developed in-depth experience in building the capacity of their client groups in information retrieval techniques. They will build on this experience through developing user support and training tools that make practical sense of the numerous information sources and services available.

22. As the key disseminators of United Nations information, depository libraries have always played an essential role in the outreach strategy of the Organization. This role will now be reinforced. With United Nations documentation free of charge over the Internet through the Official Documents System, the role of depository libraries as local custodians of United Nations documentation will have to be re-examined. There will be a move towards providing these libraries with current information in electronic form, while maintaining access to print materials as long as they are needed.

23. Goal eight of the Millennium Development Goals calls for global access to the benefits of new technologies, especially ICT. As part of their contribution to bridging the digital divide and supporting education in developing countries, the United Nations libraries will work through the depository libraries to strengthen their support to users in the developing world. This work will concentrate on building awareness of United Nations materials and their relevance to local issues as well as on training and the development of tools and products to ensure that countries with poor connectivity and low bandwidth have access to up-to-date United Nations materials in the most accessible formats. In some developing countries, in particular those where public access to a United Nations information centre is limited or restricted, further collaboration or integration of reference services with depository libraries will be explored.

24. The buildings and the physical environment that have characterized United Nations libraries are being re-examined in the light of new ways of working. The physical structure of work spaces in United Nations libraries will be redesigned to better serve the larger, more flexible and interactive working environment. Walls will become less important as library staff interact more closely with users in their daily work. The updated look of many United Nations libraries will remind visitors of Internet cafes and modern bookstores, while behind the scenes, technological efficiency will make the most of communications, processing and storage technology.

25. More important than the redesigned building space will be the new collaborative space the United Nations libraries will occupy. The libraries will have

a presence across the Organization, both by providing "live" knowledge coaches and teams that will help people find and organize information in their offices and at their workstations and through the network of behind-the-scenes library workers who will prepare targeted information resources to support the work at hand. Libraries without walls will make the work of information professionals more visible.

26. Many library users now interact with United Nations libraries almost exclusively through the telephone or computer networks. Of those who visit the physical libraries of the system, many are staff on mission making use of the computer-based resources. Libraries still provide a welcome space for browsing, reflection and research, although fewer and fewer users, tied to their office workstations or constantly in meetings, feel that they have time for these activities so important to the creative process.

27. The traditional reference areas will be transformed into common spaces for learning, discussion and meetings. Point-of-problem assistance may be offered by moveable reference kiosks near conference and meeting areas, as well as by telephone and virtual reference help desk teams. Smaller, more intimate spaces will be created to encourage reading and contemplative work. The Reading Room will become the Knowledge Centre, a place for exchanging ideas and sharing information.

28. Paper-based collections for specific purposes will remain essential for United Nations libraries for some time. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the Library at the United Nations Office at Geneva are mandated to preserve complete archival collections of official documents. Paper collections are also to be maintained by the libraries of the other duty stations for the documentation produced locally. To ensure that growing hard copy collections of such materials are secured and kept in good condition for future generations, the adoption of modern, climate-controlled compact shelving, storage and retrieval systems in renovated stacks areas, free from threat of flood and fire, will be needed.

29. Paper-based collections of externally published books and periodicals will, however, be reduced if these materials become more readily available outside United Nations libraries. Stack space for these materials will be reclaimed for materials for which United Nations libraries have a unique responsibility, including materials produced in the field. Based on areas of specialization to be determined for each library, resource-sharing of collections of external materials among United Nations libraries will ensure access while freeing up additional stack space. As the focus on the development of collections moves towards managing the rich institutional memory of the United Nations, including what has been traditionally known as grey literature, new arrangements for secure electronic storage, backup and retention will be put in place, in partnership with information technology (IT) and archives bodies.

B. New capacities: information management skills for the twenty-first century

30. Building a learning organization requires that people share what they know. Staff of the United Nations libraries will build on the core competencies of traditional library work as well as those of the Organization, by strengthening their skills in communications, software performance measuring techniques,

interviewing, coaching and training, information systems design and electronic publishing. Working more intensively with users from all United Nations client groups, library staff will align their activities, services and outputs more closely with the goals, objectives and operational priorities of the Organization.

31. Delegates, the staff of Permanent Missions, Secretariat staff, media, non-governmental organizations and other representatives of civil society, as well as external researchers and the general public, are recognized as users of United Nations libraries. The libraries are now expanding their services to include people from these groups who have not previously used conventional library services. While not all constituents have access to the premises of United Nations libraries, all have access to their rich web sites. The libraries will customize their services and information products to ensure that the most relevant and appropriate information is delivered to their many constituents.

32. The staff of United Nations libraries has been moving away from the more traditional reactive, "wait until asked" model of reference service to a model that anticipates the operational directions and information resource requirements of the Organization. In addition to service orientation and an understanding of the needs and work habits of users, staff in the library system will build their capacity in communications, survey techniques and software performance analysis in order to apply better defined user requirements for information systems development. As a result, new electronic services will be more responsive to the needs of clients. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library is launching a service that delivers, directly to clients' desktops, selected and targeted information on people management, organizational learning and content management as well as other materials related to ICT.

33. The broad knowledge of information sources possessed by staff of the United Nations library system is one of its greatest assets. Work within the system has demanded a wide view of United Nations activities that is not easy to find elsewhere in the system. This prepares staff for an active role in the implementation of integrated enterprise resource management systems as a partner with IT staff. Familiarity with a wide range of information resource types, another basic of library work, will help staff give a broader view of possibilities at the knowledge discovery stage of organizational projects, as well as providing support to training and coaching activities.

34. The ability of library staff to analyse and evaluate information environments and sources will be enhanced to produce value-added products and services targeted to the needs of United Nations users. Increasingly, they will also combine this skill with their knowledge of web technologies to build capacity among users to better assess the quality of information sources used.

35. Summarizing document content is a core component of library work. The need for this skill in the face of the sheer quantity of useful information being presented to the United Nations is growing rapidly. United Nations staff needs assistance both in gaining the skills to produce briefer, more succinct and to-the-point materials and in obtaining access to extracts, précis and executive summaries. Library staff will become a valuable source of assistance in this area.

36. As print collections shrink, libraries will act as advisers to departments on selecting and using new resources. The advisory capacity of United Nations libraries can add substantial value to information resources in the departments and divisions

of their organizations. At the same time, library staff is gaining new skills in digital preservation in order to ensure accountability and institutional memory.

37. Cataloguing, classification and indexing are technical skills that have long been recognized as a specialization of librarians and information professionals. Library staff can now apply these skills to information architecture, web-site design, taxonomy development, metadata management and corporate data quality both for specialized and cross-organizational information and content management systems.

38. Since the explosion of information in electronic form, substantial library resources have been devoted to ensuring that the authoritative content of documents is captured, tracked and preserved. Library staff will continue to build on their knowledge of the latest legal and technological developments in the area of digital rights and electronic records management to continue to ensure delivery of accurate, reliable and trustworthy information.

39. Library work requires substantial imagination and ingenuity in the use and adaptation of resources. These qualities are now needed within the United Nations library system in order to deal with the complexities of a continuously changing information environment and a working environment characterized by shrinking resources and a strong demand for client satisfaction. Innovative thinking and flexibility will be required qualities for successful performance on the job.

40. United Nations library staff will move towards a more interactive role, acting as a catalyst in and across its organizations. Putting their networking skills to work in new areas, staff in field libraries will identify the need for and facilitate the holding of electronic forums and other methods of using web-based technologies for sharing knowledge on specific development issues.

41. Libraries recognize the need for ongoing learning. The nature of library work exposes staff to a constant stream of new experience, including constantly evolving disciplines and terminology, which demand adaptation and adjustment. Challenges faced by the United Nations in the new information-based world make it necessary for library staff to take a more active role in preparing to meet change. The role of library staff as empathetic coaches, trainers and contributors to systems development will require continual upgrading of skills to meet the needs of library users. Investing in library-based human capital will become an essential budgetary priority of the Organization.

C. New partnerships

42. This programme of change within United Nations libraries will be carried out through the collaboration between the libraries and the constituencies they serve. In a networked world, the libraries are nodes in an interdependent system. Library staff cannot be expected, even with the provision of continuous learning, to develop all the skills needed to create knowledge-enabled environments. New partnerships among their client groups will use team work to tap into sources of expertise and capacity from both the United Nations library system and the user constituencies to solve problems and create resources in a way that has never been possible before. Bodies that provide common services and perform integrated functions across departments and work groups will become major partners of United Nations libraries.

43. Information technology managers are crucial to the running of United Nations libraries. If IT is to meet its promise of improving the effectiveness and quality of work, the management of electronic content cannot be separated from the management of electronic tools. The thorough understanding of content and how people use it possessed by the staff of the United Nations library system complements the expertise of IT departments: this is a natural partnership.

44. Library managers have been bringing their understanding of information sources and the organization of information and knowledge to IT projects since the introduction of computer-based library management systems in the 1960s. The knowledge accumulated while working on detailed requirements with systems analysts, developers and programmers, combined with a high level of technological experience that ranges from the implementation of database systems to the development of library web sites, makes the United Nations library system a valuable partner in broader systems development and implementation.

45. Information architecture, content quality and usability are priority areas for improving information systems for users and are areas of intensive collaboration between United Nations libraries and IT departments. In return, the libraries need IT departments to contribute their user support knowledge and skills to coaching and training activities. IT departments can also contribute their awareness of new technological tools to support the knowledge-building efforts of individuals and teams. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library, for example, cooperated with the Information Technology Services Division in the implementation of the new United Nations Intranet, iSeek. While the Division provides instruction to webmasters on the new system, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library conducts training sessions for staff. Feedback and suggestions for improving iSeek made by trainees are communicated to the Division.

46. Consultative and collaborative structures for this partnership already exist in the form of the task team for United Nations-wide taxonomy standards, a sub-group of the Enterprise Content Management Board, which reports to the Information and Communications Technology Board. This is a good beginning, but needs to be transformed into a full working partnership on enterprise content management issues affecting all United Nations organizations.

D. Organizational learning

47. Coping with the changing workplace and the need for the constant upgrading of skills is a difficult but essential task. Following the strategy of United Nations human resources departments, United Nations libraries can help address these issues through: leading knowledge management initiatives, coaching and training programmes, running workshops, interviewing, and applying knowledge assessment techniques. In return, human resources departments will be able to collaborate with the libraries by informing knowledge teams of training activities and the procurement of new management and technical training opportunities.

48. Corporate communications and public relations work is increasingly web-based. United Nations libraries will participate in the process of ensuring that awareness and understanding of United Nations policies becomes a reality through assisting with appropriate Intranet organization and content. Communications specialists, in turn, can assist in exposing library-based products and services.

49. Records management methods and techniques are becoming highly relevant in this age of huge quantities of data and information. United Nations libraries, re-focusing their mandate on materials produced by and about the United Nations, will seek an active partnership with records and archives staff to help ensure better preservation of the Organization's institutional memory. The libraries will work in partnership with records and archives staff in the development and implementation of content management strategies and personal knowledge management programmes.

E. Field operations

50. With the expanded mandate of the United Nations in the area of peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance over the past decade, United Nations staff has been called upon to serve in mission operations for which a complete infrastructure, including information management support, has to be set up.

51. The communications and public information components in peacekeeping missions are established to convey to the general public what the United Nations is doing, and why, and to promote the role of the mission. These components are public, rather than staff-oriented.

52. United Nations library staff has participated in peacekeeping missions, working with mission staff to supply relevant information in the field. The example of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) has proven that there is a growing need for immediate access to public information in all peacekeeping missions.

53. In the coming years, library staff will be called upon to use their professional knowledge and expertise to service field operations, finding, organizing and storing relevant information and analysing, evaluating, creating and disseminating it in electronic format within the mission, as well as customizing it to the needs of the users. Desktop delivery of all essential information will facilitate the effective decision-making process in field operations.

IV. Meeting the challenge

54. Identifying and understanding the changes that United Nations libraries need to make in order to meet the knowledge sharing and information management demands of the new working environment is the first step in transforming the skills, methods and knowledge bases of the United Nations libraries into a powerful resource for the Organization in the twenty-first century. To realize this vision, resources will be needed in two main areas, training and technology, and a careful evaluation of information policy issues and staffing procedures will be an essential part of the planning process.

55. Building on the base of existing skills of information professionals, library staff will need to upgrade their skills in the areas of writing for electronic publishing, making presentations, interviewing, facilitation and public relations in order to better explain their work and to participate more effectively in the networked world. Library staff will need training in up-to-date coaching and training techniques in order to work more effectively with users and participate in

United Nations learning programmes. Training in teamwork skills will be a priority. An investment in staff training in technological developments will be required on a regular basis. This should focus on information architecture, web design, content management systems and computer networking and storage systems.

56. United Nations libraries must stay at the forefront of the field of information technology if they are to meet the demand for reliable common information services. This is especially true for support to the field and in closing the information gap between the developed and developing world. United Nations libraries will need to continue to invest considerable resources in the planning, acquisition and management of technological facilities.

57. Implementing these new directions will ensure that United Nations libraries align their policy with the recommendations contained in the 2002 report of the Secretary-General, entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387).

58. Working in a complex political environment, United Nations libraries help their clients focus on United Nations priorities through providing access to the records of what the Organization has pledged to do. United Nations libraries offer steady, unbiased points of reference and access to essential context.

59. The deceptively simple statement that the United Nations needs to produce fewer, shorter reports that are richer in content directs attention to an area of expertise held in United Nations libraries. By making relevant information more accessible, United Nations libraries provide writers with more time to focus on creating good content. United Nations libraries will work in the broader content of knowledge management programmes to help United Nations staff create clearer and more concise documents.

60. United Nations libraries have rich experience in the coordination and integration of policies and methodologies and implementation of joint programmes in spite of geographical distance and organizational boundaries. Examples of this are the reorganization of the Sergio Vieira de Mello Library in Nairobi, which serves three United Nations organizations, and the Library at the United Nations Office at Geneva, which provides integrated library management to other United Nations libraries in Geneva as well as to the United Nations libraries in Vienna. United Nations libraries will continue to work from their own established networks to apply this experience in assisting sharing of knowledge among regions, regional and headquarters bodies and United Nations staff members at Headquarters.

V. Conclusions

61. The United Nations needs the transforming power of its libraries more than ever in its history. Faced with the challenges of globalization, growing political conflict, the spread of disease and hunger and the ever-widening gap between rich and poor, the need to put information and knowledge to work in solving global problems has never been more pressing. The combined experience, understanding and institutional memory embodied in the United Nations libraries and their staff has the potential to contribute significantly to this effort.

62. The mandate for the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, set out in 1949 by the General Assembly has stood the test of time. The new model of United Nations libraries will continue to fulfil this mandate using innovative approaches, tools and skills.

63. United Nations libraries will continue to serve as rich sources of knowledge for the world. Paper and other physical media repositories will remain, while new methods of custodianship and preservation will release library staff from much of the physical care of the collections to devote more skill to discovering and promoting their relevance and value. The aim of this refocus is to raise the profile of the United Nations libraries, making them visible as a networked community of facilitators and their staff perceived as essential team members in the United Nations community of knowledge workers.

Annex

United Nations libraries participating in the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations libraries

United Nations libraries represented on the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations libraries include 10 separate institutions:

Dag Hammarskjöld Library at the United Nations Headquarters in New York

Library at the United Nations Office at Geneva

United Nations libraries at Vienna, which serve the United Nations Office at Vienna, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Sergio Vieira de Mello library at Nairobi, which includes the libraries of the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, and the United Nations Information Service

The libraries of the following regional commissions:

Economic Commission for Africa

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

And the libraries of:

United Nations University

International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

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Activities of the United Nations Communications Group in 2004

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Established in 2002 at the initiative of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Communications Group has emerged as a strong unifying platform for dealing with common communications challenges facing the United Nations. It holds regular meetings at United Nations Headquarters, where current communications issues are discussed. It also meets once a year at rotating locations, at the principals level, to discuss policy issues and to agree on common responses and programmes of activity. In addition, several issue-based task forces work throughout the year to develop and carry out communications strategies. Thus, by integrating communications resources of the United Nations system and devising practical measures through which to share expertise, the Group functions as a close-knit information network, giving United Nations communicators a practical tool with which to more effectively carry out their work.

* A/AC.198/2005/1.

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I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 59 of its resolution 59/126 B of 10 December 2004, the General Assembly encouraged the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat to continue to work within the United Nations Communications Group to coordinate the implementation of communication strategies with the heads of information of the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at successive sessions on the activities of the Group. The present report, prepared in compliance with that resolution, covers the activities of the Group from March 2004 to February 2005.

2. The United Nations Communications Group, established in January 2002 at the initiative of the Secretary-General, has emerged as an important platform for inter-agency coordination in the field of public information and communications. Flexible in its approach and issue-driven, the Group provides a forum for its members within which to debate and to decide on a common course of action on the current communications challenges facing the Organization. In addition to holding an annual session, the Group has created a number of task forces to coordinate the planning and implementation of joint communications strategies on priority issues. It also holds regular meetings at United Nations Headquarters to discuss issues of current interest. Its secretariat is provided by the Department of Public Information.

II. Third annual meeting

3. The third annual meeting of the United Nations Communications Group, co-hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the secretariat of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), was held at the United Nations Office at Nairobi on 24 and 25 June 2004. The meeting provided a forum for a broad discussion on information strategies to be adopted and tools to be used for their implementation in the evolving political and media environment. Forty-two participants representing 36 agencies, programmes and funds of the United Nations system, along with the Department of Public Information and the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa of the United Nations Secretariat, and the United Nations Development Group Office, took part in the meeting.

4. The question of the relevance of the United Nations was at the centre of deliberations. The United Nations Communications Group recognized that the United Nations remained the world's only universal system created to address common global problems and that its centrality in global matters was universally accepted. It was important for United Nations communicators to remind their audiences that the success or failure of the United Nations should not be viewed through the prism of a single issue. At the same time, in order to reduce the gap between the expectations people had of the United Nations, and what the Organization was able to deliver, it was also necessary for United Nations communicators to convey the limitations of the United Nations, in addition to its accomplishments. The Group agreed that one of the key communications challenges before the United Nations system was to draw the world's attention to the many untold or underreported stories relating to the Organization's work. In this regard, the "Top Ten Stories the World Should Hear More About" initiative, launched by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information on World

Press Freedom Day 2004, was a useful tool that should be continued and strengthened. The members of the Group also agreed to continue to use the Group as the common communications platform of the United Nations system for this purpose.

5. The other broad policy issue considered at the meeting was the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (A/57/304, annex). The Group agreed that United Nations communicators should convey clear, simple and consistent messages which would help the African people to understand their responsibilities in shaping their future. A proposed advocacy and communications strategy being developed by the Partnership secretariat and the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa would form the general framework for a single common United Nations system communications strategy for the Partnership, the meeting decided.

6. The meeting also considered a communications strategy for the Millennium Development Goals Campaign. It was agreed that the overall purpose of the United Nations system Campaign was to generate awareness and mobilization around the Millennium Development Goals globally and nationally, as well as to build support for the 2005 five-year follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit. It was agreed that the campaign should have a visual identity and a common slogan. The Department of Public Information would carry out follow-up work in close contact with the Millennium Development Goals Campaign office. It was also agreed that a clearing house would be established within the Department of Public Information to maintain a central list and calendar of United Nations system events and promotional initiatives under way. The United Nations family would focus on one or two promotional events to give visibility to the Millennium Development Goals, in addition to the 2005 five-year follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit.

7. The meeting reviewed several ongoing inter-agency initiatives and adopted action plans, including:

(a) The Global Media AIDS Initiative (GMAI). Growing out of a meeting of high-level media executives with the Secretary-General (New York, 15 January 2004), GMAI has evolved into a major international initiative for coordinating HIV/AIDS-related media efforts and partnerships. United Nations Communications Group members agreed to promote the Fifteenth International AIDS Conference in Bangkok (11-16 July 2004) and other Initiative activities;

(b) The United Nations Communications Group calendar of media events. The Department of Public Information has proposed that a new United Nations system calendar of events replace the current one, which is updated only twice a year. The new calendar will be a "live document" offering, via the Internet, unified information regarding meetings, conferences, launches of flagship publications and special events that can be readily shared among all Group members. It was agreed that the new calendar would be introduced before the end of 2004;

(c) Expo 2005 (Aichi, Japan, 25 March-25 September 2005). It was agreed that the United Nations system, led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), would collectively participate in Expo 2005. The United Nations Communications Group Consultative Group for Expo 2005 would remain the principal forum for consultation and coordination. The United Nations Coordinator for Expo 2005 would communicate through this Consultative Group, either at pre-arranged meetings or via e-mail, once a month;

(d) The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS). The Service, despite the high quality and effectiveness of its work, continues to face a steady erosion of its funding (as much as one third of its annual budget). The United Nations Communications Group members agreed to look into ways to make increased contributions to the Service. They also asked the Service to pursue alternative sources of funding;

(e) Public opinion surveys. The meeting agreed that global public opinion polls could serve as a way to evaluate the impact of past United Nations communications efforts. This impact — defined as changes in knowledge, attitude and social behaviour — may ultimately be determined only by tracking global public opinion. The United Nations Communications Group task force on public opinion surveys has already taken the first steps towards involving internationally known pollsters for this purpose. The meeting agreed that the work of the task force, led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), should continue and be strengthened. It recommended that the task force contact internationally known pollsters, such as the Pew Research Institute, in addition to those that had already been approached, for pro bono surveys on United Nations-related questions.

8. The meeting also agreed to support the promotion of the UNEP International Photographic Competition on the Environment 2004-2005, sponsored by Canon, and the Summit on a Mine-Free World, to be held in Nairobi from 29 November to 3 December 2004. Other decisions include the development and adoption of common guidelines for the United Nations system on the use and distribution of United Nations photos, as well as on media accreditation at official United Nations meetings. The Department of Public Information agreed to take the lead in drafting these guidelines. The meeting agreed to hold its next annual meeting in Geneva in July 2005, to be hosted by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

9. In a users' survey conducted by the Evaluation and Communications Research Unit of the Department of Public Information, United Nations Communications Group members agreed that the Group was an effective coordination tool. They hailed the central discussion on the relevance of the United Nations as the most valuable exchange for all participants. They also agreed that most presentations were important for their work. Without exception, survey respondents applauded the hosts in Nairobi for the ample networking opportunities provided at the meeting. Nearly all respondents commented that the meeting had been productive.

III. Ongoing activities

A. Task forces

10. *Public opinion surveys*. The task force, created at the second annual meeting of the United Nations Communications Group (24 and 25 June 2003), looked into the ways and means for the United Nations system to use opinion surveys as a communications tool with which to guide policies and programmes, including consideration of targeting youth. Since polls are costly, the Group had asked the task force to consider ways to pool resources, tap outside expertise and seek pro bono assistance. Consequently, four polling organizations were contacted: Global Barometer, GlobeScan (formerly Environics International), Princeton Survey Research Associates, and Zogby International. Of these, Zogby International agreed

to include six questions relating to the Millennium Development Goals and the United Nations in future opinion polls that they would conduct in Africa, the Arab world, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the United States of America. The first available poll was held in the Arab world, covering Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates (see table). Task force participants were asked to submit suggestions for questions for the poll, and then to indicate their preferences for 6 out of the 14 questions suggested.

11. In the six questions provided to Zogby International, respondents were asked to indicate: (a) how favourable their overall opinion was of the United Nations; (b) how much information about the United Nations they had received from the Arab media; (c) how good a job the United Nations was doing to reduce poverty; (d) how good a job the United Nations was doing to ensure that all children completed primary education; (e) how good a job the United Nations was doing to combat HIV/AIDS; and (f) whether they were aware of the Millennium Development Goals. The initial results of the survey were presented at the annual meeting. The final results, presented by Zogby International in a comprehensive report, were distributed later to United Nations Communications Group members.

Public opinion survey conducted by Zogby International (June 2004), selected Arab countries: responses to the question, In general, is your overall opinion of the United Nations very favourable, somewhat favourable, somewhat unfavourable or very unfavourable?

	Favourable			*Unfavourable*			
	Overall	*Very*	*Somewhat*	*Overall*	*Very*	*Somewhat*	*Not sure*
Lebanon	**55**	26	29	**39**	10	29	7
Egypt	**47**	10	37	**27**	22	5	27
Jordan	**46**	9	37	**50**	25	25	5
Saudi Arabia	**28**	2	26	**71**	31	40	1
United Arab Emirates	**21**	3	18	**68**	30	38	10
Morocco	**15**	1	14	**80**	41	39	5

12. *Millennium Development Goals*. The task force on the Millennium Development Goals, created after the 2003 annual meeting of the United Nations Communications Group, worked towards developing a communications strategy to promote the Millennium Development Goals at the global and national levels. It adopted the slogan "Keep the promise" for the Millennium Development Goals Campaign and agreed on a common visual identity — a graffiti-style logo — for use by the United Nations system organizations. The task force agreed that there would be no strict guidelines on where the United Nations system Millennium Development Goals logo would appear on a cover or on a page, or how it would stand relative to other logos. It was likewise decided to maintain for the present the term "Millennium Development Goals" rather than adopt a broader but less familiar nomenclature.

13. *News footage*. A more recent example of collaboration within the United Nations Communications Group framework has been the establishment of a working group on video footage. Since the working group first met in March 2004, it has

begun to collect and share information with its members on news footage available for immediate use. Thanks to the efforts of the working group, the United Nations system was able to obtain quality footage on the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, the Sudan; on the state of displaced persons in Colombia; and on Chinese peacekeepers in Liberia. The working group was also instrumental in supporting better promotion of events at United Nations Headquarters through the sharing of resources. For example, the World Health Organization (WHO) provided footage for the plenary meeting of the General Assembly on global road safety and the meeting organized by the Department of Public Information in conjunction therewith (April 2004) that allowed news producers to cover a story that might have been ignored, had some good visuals not been available.

B. Participation of the United Nations system in Expo 2005

14. Following the decision by the Secretary-General to accept the invitation of the Government of Japan to participate in the 2005 World Exposition, steady progress has been made on United Nations participation. UNESCO, which was designated as the lead United Nations body for the organization of the United Nations Pavilion, appointed a United Nations Coordinator, later confirmed by the Secretary-General as Commissioner-General for Expo 2005. Under the guidelines agreed upon by the United Nations Communications Group on United Nations participation in international exhibitions, all expenses for the United Nations Pavilion are to be underwritten by the host Government. To this end, a memorandum of understanding on United Nations participation was signed by the Government of Japan and the United Nations in February 2004.

15. The Government of Japan has helped identify a private sector sponsor, the Japan Arteriosclerosis Prevention Fund, which will contribute $2.5 million towards the organization of the United Nations Pavilion. It will contribute another $0.5 million towards the establishment of a special section within the Pavilion devoted to health-related issues, more specifically, non-communicable diseases (for example, arteriosclerosis, diabetes and other ageing-related ailments).

16. The overall theme of Expo 2005 is "Nature's Wisdom". Within the framework of this theme, the focus of the United Nations Pavilion will be "Celebrating Diversity", drawing on both cultural diversity and natural diversity, and their interdependence. Exhibits, programme activities and special events will reflect the theme of diversity in ways that complement the overall goal of promoting understanding and awareness of the importance of diversity in our lives, and the need to preserve global common goods.

17. The United Nations system will be given 3 modules comprising 2.5 modules for the exclusive use of the United Nations and up to 0.5 of a module for the special exhibition on health-related issues. The centrepiece of the pavilion will be an art gallery, which will contain video art exhibits related to the main theme of the exposition. There will also be a multimedia education centre, which will offer visitors an opportunity to learn about the diverse work of the United Nations. Every day, throughout the Expo, there will be film screenings, special events and performances in the United Nations Pavilion Theatre, as well as temporary exhibits on a wide range of subjects. As many as 20 United Nations Communications Group members are providing exhibit material and arranging special events for Expo 2005.

C. Regular meetings

18. The principal forum through which the United Nations Communications Group members interact with each other is the weekly meeting held at United Nations Headquarters under the chairmanship of the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information. These meetings, which bring together a large number of Group members, including representatives of funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system and senior officials of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, allow the Group members to examine current communications challenges, review them from various perspectives and devise coordinated responses.

19. During the period under review, the Group met 31 times and covered a wide range of topics, including, the post-war developments in Iraq, the Oil-for-Food Programme inquiry, the International Criminal Court, the *Human Development Report 2004*,[1] the humanitarian crisis in Darfur and United States/United Nations relations. Guest speakers, from both within and outside the United Nations system, included Jeffrey Sachs, Adviser to the Secretary-General and Director, Millennium Project; Ana Teresa Romero, Acting Director, ILO office for the United Nations, New York; Dr. David Heymann, WHO Director-General's Representative for Polio Eradication; Amir Dossal, Executive Director, United Nations Fund for International Partnerships; and Robert Orr, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning. Their presentations, followed by open exchanges with United Nations communicators, provided unique insights on issues of current concern and promoted understanding and agreement on strategic responses. The minutes of the meetings were posted on a web site dedicated to the Group and distributed via e-mail to over 400 recipients, including the network of United Nations information centres and communications staff of the United Nations system organizations away from United Nations Headquarters.

D. United Nations Communications Group away from Headquarters

20. At the initiative of the Department of Public Information, steps have been taken to form mini-United Nations Communications Groups for United Nations system members at the national and regional levels. The network of United Nations information centres, including the regional United Nations information centre in Brussels, are taking the lead in convening meetings of United Nations communications staff to discuss, plan and carry out joint communications tasks unique to their respective regions. Over 80 per cent of the United Nations information centres reported having convened meetings of the local United Nations country team communications staff on a regular basis. The information centres also receive communications advisories, including media guidelines and other documents circulated by the Group.

IV. Conclusion

21. Since its creation three years ago, the United Nations Communications Group has emerged as a strong unifying platform for United Nations communicators. This is a practical tool that allows them to pool their resources, share expertise, exchange ideas, and undertake joint action. While the organizations of the United Nations system work in different fields, their work is guided by the priorities set by the General Assembly and the Secretary-General. As communicators, their overriding goal is to develop a common voice reflected in common strategies, but this can happen only through their being brought together in a common forum. The Group serves this indispensable role.

Notes

[1] New York, Oxford University Press, 2004.

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is the sixth in a series addressing the multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site. It is submitted to the Committee on Information for its guidance on the policy decisions required for the timely implementation of the proposals originally presented in the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/355).

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I. Introduction

1. In its report on its twenty-sixth session (26 April-7 May 2004),[1] the Committee on Information reaffirmed the need to achieve full parity among the six official languages on the United Nations web sites. In this regard, the Committee took note of the proposal of the Secretary-General (A/AC.198/2002/6, para. 33), to translate all English materials and databases posted on the United Nations web sites by the respective content-providing offices of the Secretariat into all official languages. The Committee also reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-seventh session on the most practical, efficient and cost-effective means of implementing this proposal.

2. The continued development and enhancement of the United Nations web site in all the official languages of the Organization has been one of the major issues of concern for the Committee on Information since its twenty-first session. This issue has been addressed and proposals presented in five reports of the Secretary-General. The Committee on Information considered the first report on this issue (A/AC.198/1999/6) during the first part of its twenty-first session, in May 1999. The follow-up report requested by the Committee (A/AC.198/1999/9 and Corr.1 and 2) was considered at its resumed twenty-first session, in November 1999. A third report (A/AC.198/2000/7-A/AC.172/2000/4) was requested by the Committee on Conferences and was considered by that Committee as well as the Committee on Information at its twenty-second session. The fourth report (A/AC.198/2001/8) provided an update on the development of the United Nations web site, as well as development plans for the site. The fifth report (A/AC.198/2002/6) presented two courses of action for consideration. A report submitted to the Fifth Committee (A/57/355) outlined the resource requirements to establish the six language units on a firm footing in order to meet the challenges in the move towards parity among official languages on the United Nations web site. The current report presents an update of the prevailing situation and outlines a number of possible courses of action in moving towards the goal of parity among official languages.

II. Background

3. In its resolution 59/126 B of 10 December 2004, the General Assembly encouraged efforts towards full parity on the United Nations web site among the Organization's official languages. On multilingualism and public information, the Assembly welcomed the ongoing efforts of the Department of Public Information (DPI) in that regard and emphasized the importance of ensuring the full, equitable treatment of all the official languages of the United Nations in all the activities of the Department. It recognized the fact that the integration of the Official Document System with the United Nations web site, which took effect on 31 December 2004, significantly enhances the multilingual nature of the site by providing free, public access to all United Nations parliamentary documents in the six official languages.

4. The General Assembly also noted that the multilingual development and enrichment of the United Nations web site had improved, although slower than expected owing to constraints that needed to be addressed. In that regard, it encouraged DPI to improve actions to achieve full parity among the six official languages on the United Nations web site and reaffirmed the need for parity.

5. In addition, the General Assembly stressed the need for DPI to take further measures to ensure accessibility to the web site by persons with disabilities, including those with visual and hearing disabilities. It called upon the Department, as a first step, to make further efforts for all new and revised pages to adhere to the obligatory level of compliance with recognized industry standards regarding such accessibility and to work towards compliance with all other levels of such standards, within existing resources.

III. Current governance and management

6. While DPI is the overall coordinator of the United Nations web site, the site is a decentralized system on which various departments are entitled to post their materials. The web site functions much like a library, with a vast storehouse of information incorporating many avenues for research, data gathering and public information. It is also a broadcasting medium for the dissemination of United Nations news and information on events, using image and sound — live and on demand. Moreover, it is a channel for collaborative interaction and feedback. As such, the focus of various content-providers on the web site varies, from academia to governmental bodies, to the media or various civic groups. This presents a challenge for the coherent management and presentation of the various parts of the web site.

7. Member States have recognized that individual author departments have the responsibility for producing their web sites in the official languages, thus indicating a decentralized web site governance structure. In association with the Information Technology Services Division within the Department of Management of the Secretariat, DPI administers access rights as well as the directory structure of the site. Different content providers, while working with common standards, software and structure, use the web site in a multiplicity of ways and for different primary audiences. Departments bear primary responsibility for the content of web pages relating to their own area of work. Under the current decentralized governance structure for the web site, the content-producing departments and offices prepare and upload their own materials onto the web site. The majority of these materials are in English, with a very limited number in French and still fewer in Spanish. Almost no other pages being handled by other departments are available in Arabic, Chinese or Russian. DPI works in close coordination with departments throughout the Secretariat, encouraging and assisting them, to the extent possible, to increase the availability of their materials in all official languages. Nevertheless, despite efforts by DPI and a number of other departments, the gap between English and the other official languages on the United Nations web site remains large, primarily owing to resource constraints, as the Secretary-General concluded in his report on multilingualism (A/58/363).

8. DPI, as manager of the web site, emphasizes that in order to ensure coherence, avoid duplication and rationalize the management of the United Nations web site in its entirety, there is a need to enhance coordination in terms of language and technical expertise. At present, conformity with the established standards is not enforceable. In order to achieve significant progress in the enhancement of the United Nations web site, the Working Group on Internet Matters of the Publications Board has been working to improve the guidelines to promote a more coordinated and centralized approach for web site development in languages other than English.

This has ensured greater adherence to standards for rendering new designs in all official languages, as stipulated in the guidelines for Internet publishing (ST/AI/2001/5).

9. DPI has taken responsibility for ensuring complete parity for key areas of United Nations information, within existing resources. To this end, the web pages for the activities of the General Assembly and the Security Council provide access to the documents and information on these two bodies in all the six languages; the News Centres provide breaking news in all languages; the Radio web pages provide audio news in all languages and all are updated daily. Web pages for conferences, such as the recently concluded international meeting for the 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, special events and commemorations, such as the one on the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps, are also produced in all six languages. The daily maintenance of such pages consumes a large proportion of the resources allocated to the language sites. While overall progress towards parity among languages has been slow, the web site is at full or near parity in key information areas.

IV. Current web site usage

10. Accesses to the United Nations web site have grown from over 2.1 billion in 2003 to 2.3 billion in 2004. The site currently receives an average of over 8 million accesses each weekday from more than 199 countries and territories, with almost 922,000 pages viewed daily in 2004. Page views, rather than accesses, provide a more accurate indication of *actual* usage of the material. As can be seen in table 1 below, the number of accesses to the web site as a whole increased only 7.69 per cent in 2004 over 2003. However, during the same period, the number of page views rose by nearly 26 per cent. With the expansion in database-driven portions of the site, in which one page view also counts as one access, the number of accesses will continue to rise at a much slower pace, compared to the increase in the number of page views. The increase in the number of pages viewed does indicate that interest in and use of United Nations materials via the web site continues to grow. The increase in the number of page views and accesses to the entire site in 2004, as compared to the previous years, is reflected in table 1 below.

Table 1
Page views and accesses to the United Nations web site (2002-2004)

www.un.org	Pages viewed	Accesses
Yearly totals		
2002	221 433 750	1 606 841 549
2003	268 027 080	2 165 122 997
2004	337 544 975	2 331 566 302
Daily averages		
2002	606 668	4 402 306
2003	734 321	5 931 844
2004	927 254	6 370 400

11. While the upward trend in the use of the web site has been consistent among the language sites, the amount of the increase has varied widely. Table 2 below shows the percentage increase in the number of page views and accesses to the United Nations web site across language sites, from 2003 to 2004.

Table 2

Increase in the number of page views and accesses to the United Nations web site across language sites (2004 against 2003)

(Percentage)

	Arabic	*Chinese*	*English*	*French*	*Russian*	*Spanish*	*Entire United Nations web site*
Accesses	+21.55	+194.01	+2.72	+13.78	+35.82	+16.09	+7.69
Page views	+63.96	+284.74	+19.85	+25.16	+79.74	+28.36	+25.94

12. The overall number of new pages on the site has been steadily rising. With DPI responsible for most of the language pages, the level of enhancement and maintenance activity on the web site across languages other than English and French has also been consistent in the move towards parity. The Web Services Section, which handles the bulk of these pages, has posted more new or updated pages in languages other than English or French, signifying a positive move towards incorporating more materials in the languages. This achievement is, however, overshadowed by the fact that other content-providing offices post new pages or update existing pages overwhelmingly in English. The figures in table 3, below represent only those pages handled by the Web Services Section during 2004, with some pages being updated more than once. The number of new pages in Chinese, Russian and Spanish is higher, as a result of the additional materials provided through the existing agreements with universities.

Table 3

New pages created and pages updated in 2004 by the Web Services Section of the Department of Public Information

New pages						*Updated pages*					
Arabic	*Chinese*	*English*	*French*	*Russian*	*Spanish*	*Arabic*	*Chinese*	*English*	*French*	*Russian*	*Spanish*
686	980	555	671	991	955	2 008	3 028	2 729	2 390	4 042	3 252

V. Achievements

13. In its resolution 58/101 B of 17 December 2003, the General Assembly stressed the need to adopt a decision on the multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site, considering, inter alia, the possibility of organizational restructuring towards separate language units for each of the six official languages within the Department of Public Information, in order to achieve full parity among the official languages of the United Nations. With the rationalization of the United Nations Information Centres in Western Europe, one P-4 and six General Service posts were deployed to the Web Services Section. The

formal recruitment of an officer to the P-4 post enabled the Department to move one step closer towards establishing the six language units.

14. DPI is taking a number of steps to supplement regular staffing resources in order to further advance multilingualism on the web site towards parity. In this regard, the Department wishes to express its gratitude to the Government of Spain for providing an associate expert for the development of the Spanish site, and to the International Organization of la Francophonie, for providing an associate expert to work on the French site. DPI is also aggressively utilizing the services of interns and volunteers in all languages to complement the work performed by regular staff.

15. The Department has managed to increase the number of pages available in some languages through the use of external pro bono translations provided by academic institutions. It has already signed agreements with the University of Salamanca (Spain), Shaoxing University (China) and Minsk State Linguistic University (Belarus). Similar arrangements for the translation of materials into Arabic are under discussion. While this cooperative arrangement with academic institutions is increasing the pool of available material in the three languages, the need for editorial control, programming and processing creates an additional workload on existing staff resources, detracting from the full utilization of this translation capacity.

16. In order to ensure that users in all official languages have ready access to the material available on the United Nations web site in all languages, the site-wide search engine for all official languages was successfully implemented on the United Nations web site in September 2004. However, the full use and further development of the search system to fulfil the demands from other content-providing offices for customized search pages and sub-collections to limit search results to their sites will be sporadic and will take time to implement because adequate resources have yet to be identified by these offices for this purpose.

17. Using in-house technical and linguistic expertise, the Web Services Section has introduced programming and graphic design as a common service for all languages. Through the use of UNICODE, this process has drastically reduced the need to create the underlying programming for each language separately. This has streamlined the work flow and development time by reducing manual inputting, thereby enabling much faster information delivery. This has also resulted in a more uniform appearance of web pages in all official languages. These innovations and productivity improvements through the use of internally developed database applications have also permitted implementation of sites in different languages to be achieved within existing resources. A new UN Radio site has been launched in English and is being made available in the other languages in a more compressed time frame than would otherwise have been possible. In response to rapidly changing news requirements, it is now possible to create specific news focus pages quickly in all languages, drawing on these databases. Even so, with the rapid increase in the data-driven applications, given the need for support and back-up systems to sustain this daily operation, additional capacity is still required.

18. A project initiated and developed by the Web Services Section, the UN Webcast, has been recognized by users, Member States and staff for innovation, efficiency and excellence in the delivery of the Organization's programmes and services. The UN Webcast has proven to be a cost-effective communications tool with global outreach. It broadcasts daily, live and on-demand over the Internet,

United Nations meetings such as those of the Security Council, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council, press briefings, conferences and events from Headquarters, as well as major United Nations conferences held abroad. It promotes transparency and accessibility by providing instant information to users worldwide on the proceedings of open United Nations meetings. Over 3.3 million users viewed the live UN Webcast during 2004, as well as its archived video library. The e-mail alert system for the daily webcast schedule garnered 2,423 subscribers in 2004. The expansion of webcasting to include the other languages is being actively pursued.

19. While endeavouring to achieve parity in the six official languages on the United Nations web site, especially the enhancement of the multilingual News Centre web portal and its efforts to expand its capacity to provide webcasts simultaneously in official languages, the Department is very conscious of the need to facilitate access, as much as resources permit, to United Nations information by audiences in other languages. Information on the Organization's activities is available on the Web to local audiences in 27 other languages, thereby achieving greater universality, thanks in large part to the work of the United Nations information centres, which cater to the needs of these local audiences. For example, the Regional United Nations Information Centre in Brussels continues to maintain the web sites of the information centres in Western Europe, which were closed in December 2003.

VI. Issues facing the web site

20. The report of the Secretary-General on multilingualism (A/58/363) acknowledges that the major obstacle to multilingualism is the shortage of resources and recommends that departments identify, in their budget submissions, the resources required to produce material in the six official languages and in relevant non-official languages. This is especially noteworthy, considering the scope of this undertaking, the budget constraints within the United Nations and the remarkably rapid expansion of the World Wide Web.

21. In paragraph 78 of the above-mentioned report, the Secretary-General states that:

> "the greatest obstacle to multilingualism in outputs is the shortage of resources, for while consistent funding is available for translating parliamentary documents into the six official languages, the same is not true for publications. Meanwhile, the maintenance of web sites in various languages has been largely accomplished 'within existing resources'. As a result, departments have prepared their sites in the official languages selectively, both with regard to the materials and the languages covered. Furthermore, the latter has sometimes been influenced by the availability of staff members fluent in the languages in question, or of external agencies willing to provide funding or in-kind services for particular languages, as well as by anticipated target audiences".

22. As a consequence of the requirement to ensure accessibility to the United Nations web site by persons with disabilities, including those with visual and hearing disabilities, a portion of the existing resources is being allocated to this function. There are widely differing standards in various countries, as well as within the international Internet community. A single recognized set of standards that can

be applied universally is yet to emerge. Moreover, most standards and technical solutions currently exist largely for English only, with few technical solutions for accessibility for some of the official languages. The Department, however, is not waiting for a unified agreed standard to be set. Instead, it is looking into the use of software which would allow users to automate testing to meet accessibility and usability guidelines and simplify the process of understanding and complying with the World Wide Web Consortium standards, which address accessibility requirements for persons with physical, visual, auditory, cognitive and neurological disabilities. The United Nations web site has so far implemented the basic accessibility requirements for the top layers of the site and continues to work on wider implementation. Accessibility in English will be standardized first, followed by the other official languages, as the guidelines for those languages are developed.

23. Tracking and analysing site usage is a key tool in improving navigation and usability of a web site. More sophisticated analysis will permit prioritization to topics of interest across languages. The United Nations Web Services Section is providing nearly 150 daily and monthly log analysis statistics. In 2005, the log analysis features are being expanded in order to introduce new analytic parameters (including key word analysis, more identifiable visitor country location and broken links reports) and to ensure improved response to the user demands as well as enhanced quality control. Discussions with the Information Technology Services Division are at an advanced stage about the technical aspects of implementing this sophisticated analysis system, which will permit ongoing evaluation of the site.

24. One of the constraints in moving towards parity among languages is the level of technical expertise available in author departments and offices. To address this issue, in-house, specialized training in relevant web development software was made available to staff in 2004, thanks to the efforts of DPI and the Office of Human Resources Management. This provided a very cost-effective measure, affording an opportunity to all staff working on their respective sites to enhance their skills and be more productive.

VII. Future plans

25. The UN Web Services Section is planning to redesign the top level pages of the United Nations web site in 2005. The new "look" will incorporate database-driven features for an automated process and easy access to news and latest developments, as well as better navigation, presentation, search and accessibility in compliance with the requirements for persons with disabilities.

26. The United Nations web site was created and brought to its current status entirely through the use of existing resources. No new resources were allocated to DPI specifically for the web site. In accordance with paragraph 2 of part IX of General Assembly resolution 59/276 of 23 December 2004, proposals to strengthen the United Nations web site will be submitted within the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007. This is designed to provide all language units with resources that will facilitate the maintenance and development of the language sites and will go a long way in meeting the challenges of the move towards parity among languages.

27. Earlier reports indicated the scale of the additional resources required to achieve parity. In the absence of these resources, DPI continues to strive towards

improving parity without sacrificing the comprehensiveness and the up-to-date nature of the site. Key to this strategy is focusing on heavily used sites covering a wide range of activities. Parity has already been achieved in the General Assembly, Security Council, news and radio portions of the site. DPI will strive to expand parity to other areas.

28. Included in the plans are the expansion of the capacity to disseminate information to meet new technology standards and demands, access to news by RSS[2] feeds, sending news to mobile devices and creating news mailing lists. Owing to the infrastructural requirements of handling large amounts of outgoing mail, the e-mail news alerts service in the languages will be implemented on a step-by-step basis.

29. Contingent upon the availability of adequate webcast facilities and resources, the UN Webcast plans to expand its services to broadcast worldwide over the Internet in the six official languages.

30. Furthermore, the UN Webcast is building partnerships with other departments and offices to produce training and other informational webcast videos for distance learning. For example, the Section is in the process of establishing a partnership with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to produce webcast training videos for civilian police, peacekeepers and staff in the field.

VIII. Conclusion

31. The Department of Public Information will be unable to redeploy additional resources towards parity among languages on the United Nations web site without adversely affecting other mandated activities. As indicated in paragraph 26, proposals to strengthen the United Nations web site will be submitted within the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007. This would further enable the Department to accelerate the move towards parity in the maintenance and development of key areas of the United Nations web site.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/59/21).

[2] RSS, which stands for Really Simple Syndication, is a format designed for sharing headlines and other Web content and is used for syndicating news and the content of news-like sites. RSS is a distributable version of the changing content of a web site that can be automatically picked up and used by any number of external sites.